

3 Things Successful People Do

John C. Maxwell

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MAXWELL

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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THE ROAD MAP THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE

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The Journey Is More Fun If You Know Where You're Going

Several years ago, as I was thumbing through *Success* magazine, I came across a study that Gallup did on what people thought it meant to be a success. That appealed to me because I've always been interested in helping others to become successful, and I wanted to know what Gallup had gleaned. Their answers fell into twelve categories, but the number one answer was "good health." Fifty-eight percent of the people identified that with success over anything else. I don't know about you, but I value good health—and after my heart attack I value it even more. But if I had only good health and nothing else, I don't know that I would label myself "successful."

I've discovered that people often find it hard to define success. But if you don't know what success is, how will you ever achieve it? That's why I want to help you identify a definition of success that will work for you: success is a journey.

Let me begin to illustrate by telling you a story. Several years ago, I stood before the seventy-four employees of INJOY—the organization I had founded in 1985 to teach leadership and personal development—and prepared to tell them some news that I knew would be exciting to some and discouraging to others. I was going to tell them that in a year's time, we would be moving the company from San Diego, California, to Atlanta, Georgia.

My friend Dick Peterson, INJOY's president at the time, and I had been talking about the possibility of moving the company for about six months. It had begun as a casual "what if . . ." conversation, but then we started giving it more serious thought. We weighed the advantages and asked our director of finance to run some numbers. We talked about the opportunities that such a move would bring. And finally, we determined that moving to Atlanta made sense professionally, logistically, and economically. We knew that if we

wanted to go to a new level in our growth and development, not only as a company, but as individuals, we needed to make the change.

In many ways, that was a very tough decision. I never expected to leave San Diego. From the day we moved there from Indiana, my wife, Margaret, and I felt that it was home. It was the only home that our kids, Elizabeth and Joel Porter, had ever really known. But as much as we loved living in San Diego, we were willing to make the sacrifice of moving away so that we could achieve greater success.

Our more serious concern was for the people on the INJOY team. We weren't sure how they would react. San Diego is one of the most beautiful cities in the country, and the weather is perfect. Many of our employees were San Diego natives, and they had a lot to keep them there.

As I prepared to talk to the staff, there was a noisy energy in the room. All of us hadn't met as a group in almost a year, and I could see the excitement and anticipation in many of their faces.

"Gang, I'd like to have your attention," I started. "I have a very important announcement to make. In one year from now, we will be moving INJOY to Atlanta." I saw a whole range of reactions. Some looked shocked. Others looked as if they had been punched in the stomach. Jayne Hansen, one of our best customer service representatives, was wide-eyed as her chin dropped, and she coughed out a short breath in disbelief every eight to ten seconds for the first minute that I talked. From our managers I saw relief: they had been keeping their knowledge of the move secret for weeks.

For fifty minutes, Dick Peterson and I explained all our reasons for the move, gave them stats and information on Atlanta, and showed them a video from the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. And we told them that anyone who was willing to go to Atlanta would have a job when he or she got there. Then we introduced two people who had flown in from Atlanta's best real estate agency to answer questions.

Willing to Take the Journey

We weren't sure what kind of reaction we would get from our staff. We were proposing a major move that would radically change their lives. What a surprise it was when more than 90 percent of the team said they would move or at least consider moving to Atlanta! They were willing to take the trip.

That got me to thinking. Why were so many of them willing to be uprooted, leaving behind everything that was familiar, including family and friends, to move all the way across the country? I

concluded that they were willing to go for four reasons:

1. We gave them a picture of where they were going.

As Dick, the two real estate agents, and I spoke to our people, we gave them a picture of our future in Atlanta: the positive working environment, the greater number of lives that we would be able to touch, the improvement in their quality of life, and the opportunity that we as a company would have to go to the next level. They could see it all—the benefits to them personally and to the company.

2. We answered their questions.

The prospect of taking a journey can create insecurity and lead to numerous questions. Our people wanted to know where we would be locating the office, what Atlanta's schools were like, the condition of the housing market, the cultural and entertainment attractions available in the city, the state tax structure, and so on. In that first meeting, we were able to answer nearly all of their questions.

3. They had experienced personal success in their lives.

As a team, INJOY was experiencing success, and so were the individuals. They were responsible for the company's success and at the same time were enjoying the fruits of that success. They had a sense of purpose. They were growing personally. And they were helping others.

4. They were no longer the same and wanted to continue to have significance.

A couple of weeks before we announced the move, I heard Patty Knoll, one of our employees, say, "I love working for INJOY, helping so many people through what we do. I can't imagine working anywhere else." Once a person has tasted success and realizes that her efforts have significance, it's something that she never forgets—and that she never wants to give up. Making a difference in the lives of others changes her outlook on life and her priorities.

You may be saying to yourself, "That's great. It's good that your people wanted to move to Georgia. But what does that have to do with me? I'm not going on this trip to Atlanta! What about the definition of success?"

It's true that you may not be moving to Atlanta, but you are

preparing to go on a journey, the journey of success, and that trip has the potential of taking you a long way—maybe farther than you’ve dreamed. To take it, you’ll need the same things that our people at INJOY needed: a picture of where you’re going, answers to your questions about success, knowledge of what success is like, and the ability to change and continue growing.

It’s my desire to provide these things for you in this book. I want to teach you what it means to be on the success journey, answer many of your questions, and equip you with what you’ll need to change yourself and keep growing. In the process, you’ll discover that success is for everyone: the homemaker and the businessperson, the student and the person approaching retirement, the athlete and the local church pastor, the factory worker and the entrepreneur.

The Traditional Picture of Success

The problem for most people who want to be successful is *not* that they can’t achieve success. The main obstacle for them is that they misunderstand success. Maltbie D. Babcock said, “One of the most common mistakes and one of the costliest is thinking that success is due to some genius, some magic, something or other which we do not possess.”

What is success? What does it look like? Most people have a vague picture of what it means to be a successful person that looks something like this:

The wealth of Bill Gates,
the physique of Arnold Schwarzenegger
(or Cindy Crawford),
the intelligence of Albert Einstein,
the athletic ability of Michael Jordan,
the creativity of Steve Jobs,
the social grace and poise of Jackie Kennedy,
the imagination of Walt Disney, and
the heart of Mother Teresa.

That sounds absurd, but it’s closer to the truth than we would like to admit. Many of us picture success as looking like one other than who we are—and we especially can’t be eight other people! And more important than that, you shouldn’t want to be. If you tried to become just like even one of these other people, you wouldn’t be successful. You would be a bad imitation of them, and you would eliminate the

possibility of becoming the person you were meant to be.

The Wrong Picture of Success

Even if you avoid the trap of thinking that success means being like some other person, you might still have a wrong picture of success. Frankly, the majority of people misunderstand it. They wrongly equate it with achievement of some sort, with arriving at a destination or attaining a goal. Here are several of the most common misconceptions about success:

Wealth

Probably the most common misunderstanding about success is that it's the same as having money. A lot of people believe that if they accumulate wealth, they will be successful. But wealth does not bring contentment or success.

Industrialist John D. Rockefeller, a man so rich that he gave away more than \$350 million in his lifetime, was once asked how much money it would take to satisfy him. His reply: "Just a little bit more." King Solomon of ancient Israel, said to be not only the wisest but also the richest man who ever lived, asserted, "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income."¹

Wealth and what it brings are at best fleeting. For example, in 1923, a small group of the world's wealthiest men met at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. They were a "Who's Who" of wealth and power. At that time, they controlled more money than the total amount contained in the United States Treasury. Here is a list of who was there and what eventually happened to them:

- Charles Schwab—president of the largest independent steel company—died broke.
- Arthur Cutten—greatest of the wheat speculators—died abroad, insolvent.
- Richard Whitney—president of the New York Stock Exchange—died just after release from Sing Sing prison.
- Albert Fall—member of a U.S. president's cabinet—was pardoned from prison so that he could die at home.
- Jess Livermore—greatest "bear" on Wall Street—committed suicide.
- Leon Fraser—president of the Bank of International Settlements

—committed suicide.

- Ivar Kreuger—head of the world’s greatest monopoly—committed suicide.[2](#)

Even Greek millionaire Aristotle Onassis, who retained his wealth and died at a ripe old age, recognized that money isn’t the same as success. He maintained that “after you reach a certain point, money becomes unimportant. What matters is success.”

A Special Feeling

Another common misconception is that people have achieved success when they feel successful or happy. But trying to *feel* successful is probably even more difficult than trying to become wealthy. The continual search for happiness is a primary reason that so many people are miserable. If you make happiness your goal, you are almost certainly destined to fail. You will be on a continual roller coaster, changing from successful to unsuccessful with every mood change. Life is uncertain, and emotions aren’t stable. Happiness simply cannot be relied on as a measure of success.

Specific and Worthwhile Possessions

Think back to when you were a kid. Chances are that there was a time when you wanted something badly, and you believed that if you possessed that thing, it would make a significant difference in your life. For me, it was a burgundy and silver Schwinn bicycle. One Christmas morning when I looked under the tree, I saw my vision of what a bicycle ought to be. That was back when bikes were bikes. They were solid as tanks. And mine had everything I could ever want on it: mud flaps, chrome, bells, lights—the works. For a while it was great. I loved that bike, and I spent a lot of time riding it. But I soon discovered that it didn’t bring me the success or long-term contentment that I hoped for and expected.

That process has repeated itself in my life. I found that success didn’t come when I became a starter on my high school basketball team, when I became the student body president in college, or when I bought my first house. It has never come as the result of possessing something I wanted. Possessions are at best a temporary fix. Success cannot be attained or measured that way.

Power

Charles McElroy once joked, “Power is usually recognized as an excellent short-term antidepressant.” That statement contains a lot of

truth because power often gives the appearance of success, but even then, it's only temporary.

You've probably heard the quote from English historian Lord Acton: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Power really is a test of character. In the hands of a person of integrity, it is of tremendous benefit; in the hands of a tyrant, it causes terrible destruction. By itself, power is neither positive nor negative. And it is not the source of security or success. Besides, all dictators—even benevolent ones—eventually lose power.

Achievement

Many people have what I call "destination disease." They believe that if they can arrive somewhere—attain a position, accomplish a goal, or have a relationship with the right person—they will be successful. At one time, I had a similar view of success. I defined it as the progressive realization of a predetermined, worthwhile goal. But over time I realized that the definition fell short of the mark.

Simply achieving goals doesn't guarantee success or contentment. Look at what happened with Michael Jordan. In 1993, he decided to retire from basketball, saying that he had accomplished all the goals he had wanted to achieve. And then he went on to play baseball in the minor leagues—but not for long. He couldn't stay away from the game of basketball, and he came out of retirement two times to play several more years. *Playing the game*, being in the midst of the process, was the thing. You see, success isn't a list of goals to be checked off one after another. It's not reaching a destination. Success is a journey.

The Right Picture of Success

So how do you get started on the success journey? What does it take to be a success? Two things are required: the right picture of success and the right principles for getting there.

The picture of success isn't the same for any two people because we're all created differently as unique individuals. But the process is the same for everyone. It's based on principles that do not change. After more than twenty-five years of knowing successful people and studying the subject, I have developed the following definition of success:

Success is . . .

knowing your purpose in life, growing to

reach your maximum potential, and sowing seeds that benefit others.

You can see by this definition why success is a journey rather than a destination. No matter how long you live or what you decide to do in life, you will never exhaust your capacity to grow toward your potential or run out of opportunities to help others. When you see success as a journey, you'll never have the problem of trying to "arrive" at an elusive final destination. And you'll never find yourself in a position where you have accomplished some final goal, only to discover that you're still unfulfilled and searching for something else to do.

Another benefit of focusing on the journey of success instead of on arriving at a destination or achieving a goal is that you have the potential to become a success *today*. The very moment that you make the shift to finding your purpose, growing to your potential, and helping others, successful is something you *are right now*, not something you vaguely hope one day to be.

To get a better handle on these aspects of success, let's take a look at each one of them:

Knowing Your Purpose

Nothing can take the place of knowing your purpose. Millionaire industrialist Henry J. Kaiser, the founder of Kaiser Aluminum as well as the Kaiser-Permanente health-care system, said, "The evidence is overwhelming that you cannot begin to achieve your best unless you set some aim in life." Or put another way, if you don't try actively to discover your purpose, you're likely to spend your life doing the wrong things.

I believe that God created every person for a purpose. According to psychologist Viktor Frankl, "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life. Everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus everyone's task is as unique as his specific opportunity to implement it." Each of us has a purpose for which we were created. Our responsibility—and our greatest joy—is to identify it.

Here are some questions to ask yourself to help you identify your purpose:

- *For what am I searching?* All of us have a strong desire buried in our hearts, something that speaks to our deepest thoughts and feelings, something that sets our souls on fire. Some people have a strong sense of what that is when they're just children. Others

take half a lifetime to discover it. But no matter what, it's there. You only need to find it. (I'll talk more about how to develop the dream that's within you in the next chapter.)

- *Why was I created?* Each of us is different. No one else in the world has exactly the same gifts, talents, background, or future. That's one of the reasons it would be a serious mistake for you to try to be someone other than yourself. Think about your unique mix of abilities, the resources available to you, your personal history, and the opportunities around you. If you objectively identify these factors and discover the desire of your heart, you will have done a lot toward discovering your purpose in life.
- *Do I believe in my potential?* You cannot consistently act in a manner inconsistent with the way you see yourself. If you don't believe that you have potential, you will never try to reach it. And if you aren't willing to work toward reaching your potential, you will never be successful.

Growing to Your Potential

Novelist H. G. Wells held that wealth, notoriety, place, and power are no measures of success whatsoever. The only true measure of success is the ratio between what we might have been and what we have become. In other words, success comes as the result of growing to our potential.

It's been said that our potential is God's gift to us, and what we do with it is our gift to him. But at the same time, our potential is probably our greatest untapped resource. Henry Ford observed, "There is no man living who isn't capable of doing more than he thinks he can do."

We have nearly limitless potential, yet too few ever try to reach it. Why? The answer lies in this: We can do *anything*, but we can't do *everything*. Many people let everyone around them decide their agendas in life. As a result, they never really dedicate themselves to *their* purpose in life. They become a jack-of-all-trades, master of none—rather than a jack-of-few-trades, focused on one.

If that describes you more than you'd like, you're probably ready to take steps to make a change. Here are four principles to put you on the road to growing toward your potential:

1. *Concentrate on one main goal.*

Nobody ever reached her potential by scattering herself in twenty directions. Reaching your potential requires focus. That's why it's so important for you to discover your purpose. Once you've decided

where to focus your attention, you must decide what you are willing to give up to do it. And that's crucial. There can be no success without sacrifice. The two go hand in hand. If you desire to accomplish little, sacrifice little. But if you want to accomplish great things, be willing to sacrifice much.

2. Concentrate on continual improvement.

David D. Glass, chief executive officer of Wal-Mart stores, was once asked whom he admired most. His answer was Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton. He remarked, "There's never been a day in his life, since I've known him, that he didn't improve in some way."

Commitment to continual improvement is the key to reaching your potential and to being successful. Each day you can become a little bit better than you were yesterday. It puts you one step closer to your potential. And you'll also find that what you get as the result of your growth is not nearly as important as what you become along the way.

3. Forget the past.

My friend Jack Hayford, founding pastor of Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, commented, "The past is a dead issue, and we can't gain any momentum moving toward tomorrow if we are dragging the past behind us." Unfortunately, that's what too many people do; they drag the past with them wherever they go. And as a result, they never make any progress.

Maybe you've made a lot of mistakes in your life, or you've had an especially difficult past with many obstacles. Work your way through it and move on. Don't let it prevent you from reaching your potential.

If you need inspiration, think of other people who overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles, such as Booker T. Washington. He was born into slavery and was denied access to the resources available to white society, but he never let that prevent him from pursuing his potential. He founded the Tuskegee Institute and the National Black Business League. He said, "I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed."

No doubt, you can think of others who have overcome tragedies or past mistakes to pursue their potential. You may even know personally some people who fought back from adversity to become successful. Let them inspire you. No matter what you've faced in the past, you have the potential to overcome it.

4. Focus on the future.

Baseball Hall of Famer Yogi Berra declared, “The future isn’t what it used to be.” Although that may be true, it’s still the only place we have to go. Your potential lies ahead of you—whether you’re eight, eighteen, forty-eight, or eighty. You still have room to improve yourself.

Sowing Seeds That Benefit Others

When you know your purpose in life and are growing to reach your maximum potential, you’re well on your way to being a success. But there is one more essential part of the success journey: helping others. Without that aspect, the journey can be a lonely and shallow experience.

It’s been said that we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. Physician, theologian, and philosopher Albert Schweitzer stated it even more strongly: “The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others.” For him, the success journey led to Africa where he served people for many years.

For you, sowing seeds that benefit others probably won’t mean traveling to another country to serve the poor—unless that is the purpose you were born to fulfill. (And if it is, you won’t be satisfied until that’s what you’re doing.) However, if you’re like most people, helping others is something you can do right here at home, whether it’s spending more time with your family, developing an employee who shows potential, helping people in the community, or putting your desires on hold for the sake of your team at work. The key is to find your purpose and help others while you’re pursuing it. Entertainer Danny Thomas insisted that “all of us are born for a reason, but all of us don’t discover why. Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It’s what you do for others.”

The success journey will not look the same for everyone because the picture of success is different for every person. But the principles used to take the journey don’t change. They can be applied at home, in school, at the office, on the ball field, and in church. That’s what the remainder of this book is about—the principles that can help you work toward knowing your purpose, growing to your potential, and sowing seeds that benefit others. It doesn’t matter where you are now. You can learn and apply these ideas. You can be successful today.

Please allow me to guide you, so you can also know what it means to take the success journey. You’ll never look at success the same way

again, and your life will be changed forever. You'll agree with columnist Whit Hobbs, who wrote, "Success is waking up in the morning, whoever you are, wherever you are, however old or young, and bounding out of bed because there's something out there that you love to do, that you believe in, that you're good at—something that's bigger than you are, and you can hardly wait to get at it again today."

Come on. Let's get started!



PART 1



KNOWING YOUR PURPOSE



Where Would I Like to Go?

As I began working on this book, I set aside some time to talk to a dozen or so friends, family members, and colleagues to find out their thoughts about travel. One of the things I asked them was where they would go if they could take a trip to anywhere in the world. They gave me quite a variety of answers.

Jayne Hansen wanted to return to Heidelberg, Germany. She had spent three years in various parts of Germany with her husband, Brad, and she particularly loved the people, gorgeous sights, and food in Heidelberg. It held warm memories for her.

Miriam Phillips said she wanted to go to Australia to explore the outback and see some of the unusual animals; she especially wanted to see koalas in person. Miriam thought the trip would be an adventure.

Charlie Wetzel said he wanted to go to England to see the places tied to the history and literature he studied in school: the Tower of London, Fleet Street, the site of the Battle of Hastings, and the Lake Country. Seeing them in person would bring vividly to life many of the memorable stories he had read.

I enjoyed talking with them about their dreams for travel. Their eyes lit up and their speech quickened as they pictured in their minds the places they would see and the activities they would do. I also asked them another question: Why hadn't they taken their dream trips? A couple of people said they didn't want to go alone and were waiting until they found a traveling companion. Many of them said they didn't have the money. Others noted that they lacked the time.

It's been my experience that we make time and set aside money for the things that are most important to us. All of the people who go on their dream trips don't have unlimited money and time. They make the journey because they plan ahead and they're willing to pay whatever price is required for them to go.

Now let me ask you a similar question: If you could go anywhere, where would you like to go? Not in terms of vacations, but in your

life. Your answer to that question does a lot to determine whether or not you're successful. You see, we're all on a journey, whether we know it or not. We are traveling inevitably toward the ends of our lives. So the real question for us is whether we're going to select a destination and steer a course for it, or allow ourselves to be swept along with the tide, letting others determine where we'll end up. The choice is entirely up to us.

A Cruise to Nowhere

If you live in a town near the ocean, you may have seen advertisements for "cruises to nowhere." People get on board a cruise ship, and when they leave the pier, instead of setting out for a lush island or other exotic location, they go out to sea and travel in circles for a couple of days. Meanwhile they dine on sumptuous meals, lounge around the pool, enjoy the shows, and participate in onboard activities. It's similar to checking in to a fine hotel or resort.

The problem for a lot of people is that their lives are too much like those cruises. They're on a trip with no set destination, no charted course. They're in a holding pattern, and they occupy their time pursuing pleasures or engaging in activities that don't have any lasting benefit for themselves or others. Meanwhile, they travel in circles. In the end, they finish no better than they started. A cruise to nowhere may be a fun way to occupy a few days of vacation time, but it's no way to spend your life.

As I mentioned before, success is a journey. You don't suddenly become successful when you arrive at a particular place or achieve a certain goal. But that doesn't mean you should travel without identifying a destination. You can't fulfill your purpose and grow toward your potential if you don't know what direction you should be going. You need to identify and sail toward your destination. In other words, you need to discover your dream.

The Power of a Dream

I believe that each of us has a dream placed in the heart. I'm talking about a vision deep inside that speaks to the very soul. It's the thing we were born to do. It draws on our talents and gifts. It appeals to our highest ideals. It sparks our feelings of destiny. It is inseparably linked to our purpose in life. The dream starts us on the success journey.

When I look for the name of a person who identified and lived out

his dream, I think of auto industry pioneer and visionary Henry Ford. He asserted, “The whole secret of a successful life is to find out what it is one’s destiny to do, and then do it.”

Ford’s dream grew out of his interest in anything mechanical. From boyhood, he had a passion for studying and tinkering with machinery. He taught himself about steam engines, clocks, and combustion engines. He traveled around the countryside doing repair work for free, just so he could get his hands on machines. He became a mechanic and watchmaker. He even worked as a night engineer for the Detroit Edison Company.

Ford became increasingly intrigued by the idea of the automobile, and he devoted more and more of his attention to it. In 1896, he built his first car in a shed behind his house. After that, he continued to think about how to improve his early efforts, and he studied the work of other car builders, including that of Ransom E. Olds, who manufactured the first Oldsmobile in 1900.

Out of his love for machinery and intrigue over the automobile grew Ford’s dream: the creation of an inexpensive, mass-produced automobile. Until then, the new horseless carriage had been an expensive luxury item, available to only the rich. But Ford was determined to put the automobile within the reach of the common person. In 1899, he helped form the Detroit Motor Company. But when his fellow organizers balked at the idea of manufacturing their product inexpensively in order to sell it to the masses, he left the company. However, he held on to his dream, and his efforts finally paid off. In 1903, he organized the Ford Motor Company and began to produce the Model T. The first year his new company produced just under 6,000 cars. But only eight years later, they produced more than 500,000. And they managed to reduce the initial retail price from \$850 to only \$360. Ford’s dream became a reality.

Ford has been called a genius and has been credited with the birth of the assembly line and mass production. But no matter what he had going for him, his asset was his dream and his willingness to devote himself to it.

A dream does many things for us:

A Dream Gives Us Direction

Have you ever known a person who didn’t have a clue concerning what she wanted in life, yet was highly successful? I haven’t either. We all need something worthwhile to aim for. A dream provides us with that. It acts as a compass, telling us the direction we should travel. And until we’ve identified that right direction, we’ll never know for sure that our movement is actually progress. Our actions are

just as likely to take us backward instead of forward. If you move in *any* direction other than toward your dream, you'll miss out on the opportunities necessary to be successful.

A Dream Increases Our Potential

Without a dream, we may struggle to see potential in ourselves because we don't look beyond our current circumstances. But with a dream, we begin to see ourselves in a new light, as having greater potential and being capable of stretching and growing to reach it. Every opportunity we meet, every resource we discover, every talent we develop, becomes a part of our potential to grow toward that dream. The greater the dream, the greater the potential.

A Dream Helps Us Prioritize

A dream gives us hope for the future, and it also brings us power in the present. It makes it possible for us to prioritize everything we do. A person who has a dream knows what he is willing to *give up* in order to *go up*. He is able to measure everything he does according to whether or not it contributes to the dream, concentrating his attention on the things that bring him closer to it and giving less attention to everything that doesn't.

A Dream Adds Value to Our Work

A dream puts everything we do into perspective. Even the tasks that aren't exciting or immediately rewarding take on added value when we know they ultimately contribute to the fulfillment of a dream. Each activity becomes an important piece in that bigger picture. It reminds me of the story of a reporter who talked to three construction workers pouring concrete at a building site. "What are you doing?" he asked the first worker. "I'm earning a paycheck," he grumbled.

The reporter asked the same question of a second laborer, who looked over his shoulder and said, "What's it look like I'm doing? I'm pouring concrete."

Then he noticed a third man who was smiling and whistling as he worked. "What are you doing?" he asked the third worker.

He stopped what he was doing and said excitedly, "I'm building a shelter for the homeless." He wiped his hands clean on a rag and then pointed. "Look, over there is where the kitchen will be. And that over there is the women's dormitory. This here . . ."

Each man was doing the same job. But only the third was motivated by a larger vision. The work he did was fulfilling a dream,

and it added value to all his efforts.

Vince Lombardi stated, “I firmly believe that any man’s finest hour—his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear—is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle—victorious.” A dream provides the perspective that makes that kind of effort possible.

Stages for Developing a Dream

Over the years I’ve learned a lot about vision and what it means to have a dream because it’s such a critical part of leadership. I’ve observed that there is a big difference between those who dream and those who make their dreams come true. As Nolan Bushnell, founder of Atari, said, “Everyone gets an idea in the shower. But the successful ones get out of the shower, dry off, and do something about it.”

Here are the stages in developing a successful dream, based on my personal experience and observation:

I Thought It

The whole process begins with the seed of an idea—a vision that grows out of a heartfelt desire. Many people discover their dream in a flash of insight after working in an area for years. Some receive it in a time of prayer. Others are motivated by an event from their past. Maybe you’ve already experienced the “I Thought It” stage and discovered your dream. If you haven’t, read the following four steps that will help you clear away the clutter and discover (or fine-tune) your dream:

1. Believe in your ability to succeed.

As I said before, no person can consistently perform in a manner that is inconsistent with the way he sees himself. You must believe that you *can* succeed if you *are* to succeed. You must acknowledge to yourself that you’re capable of discovering your dream in order to find it. You don’t have to be a genius, lucky, or rich. You just need to believe it can happen.

2. Get rid of your pride.

People full of themselves usually don’t have much room left over for a life-changing dream. That’s why it’s so important to get rid of pride; it can keep you from trying new things or asking questions because you are afraid of looking stupid. It makes you want to stay in your comfort

zone instead of striving for the end zone. Pride puts your focus on appearance instead of potential. And it prevents you from taking risks—something you must do to discover your dream. If you are a prideful person, it's time to let go of your pride and grab hold of your dream.

3. Cultivate constructive discontent.

Discontent is the driving force that makes people search for their dreams. Think about it: Every invention registered in the United States Patent Office is the result of creative discontent. Each inventor, not satisfied with something as it was, found a way to constructively overcome her dissatisfaction, either by creating something new or by improving what already existed.

The same is true for you. Complacency never brings success. You must desire positive change. Only constructive discontent will motivate you to find your purpose and grow to reach your potential.

4. Escape from habit.

A habit can be defined as something you do without thinking. Habit can kill a dream because when you stop thinking, you stop questioning and dreaming. You begin to accept what *is* without considering what *could be*. Habit can cause you to go through the motions rather than think about the possibilities. It slowly closes the door on potential.

Examine all the things you're currently doing by rote. Then shake things up. Look to your horizons. What do you really care about? What are you currently doing that doesn't propel you in the direction of your purpose, develop your potential, or help other people? Start making changes. Be creative. Break out of a rut and start searching inside yourself for your dream.

I Caught It

The moment you discover your dream—the thing you were created to do—is an incredible experience. But that alone is not enough to take you on the success journey. The development of a successful dream is a process. And the next step of development requires you to invest in your dream emotionally. It needs to grow beyond your thoughts and carry over into your feelings.

I Sought It

An old Italian proverb says, "Between saying and doing, many a pair of shoes is worn out." Lots of people have dreams. And many of them have strong feelings about them. But what separates the

developer of a successful dream from a mere daydreamer is committed action. Between the “I Caught It” and “I Sought It” stages, dreams don’t die—they fade away. It takes hunger, tenacity, and commitment to see a dream through until it becomes reality. Once you discover your dream, go after it.

A Few Shot It

If a dream faces the risk of fading away before it gets to the “I Sought It” stage, then the danger after that stage is that it will be suddenly and deliberately shot down. During its early stages, a dream is an incredibly fragile thing. As corporate leadership expert, management consultant, and friend Bobb Biehl says, “Dreams are like soap bubbles floating close to jagged rocks on a windy day.”

Dreams are so fragile at this stage of the journey because they are so new. We haven’t had time yet to let them grow or develop. They’re not established, and they don’t have a track record yet. When a seedling oak is only a year old, a child can tear it out by the roots. But once it’s had some time to become firmly established, even the force of a hurricane can’t knock it down.

Dreams are also more easily shot down at this point because if they are attacked, close friends or family members are the usual attackers since they’re the only ones who know about them. Our hopes and desires may be able to weather the criticism of a stranger, but they have a more difficult time surviving when undermined by a loved one.

I Got It

Most people have no idea how close they are to breaking through and living their dreams, to reaching the “I Got It” stage. Success is achieved in inches, not miles. For example, the average baseball player in major-league baseball hits about .250. Another way to say it is that he gets a hit once for every four times he bats. Someone with average fielding skills who bats .250 can play in the major leagues, but he probably won’t be remembered after he has left the game.

Contrast that with someone like Tony Gwynn, who spent his entire career with the San Diego Padres. He is considered one of the best hitters in baseball. He won eight National League batting championships in the twenty seasons he played. And on August 6, 2000, he became the 22nd player in history to collect 3,000 hits. In 2007, he was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

If you didn’t know baseball, you might expect that in order to be as successful as he was, he would be twice as good at hitting the ball as the average player. But that’s not the case. Tony had a lifetime batting

average of .338. That means he got a hit one in every three times at bat. You would have to go to three baseball games before you saw the one extra hit Tony got compared to the average player hitting .250.

Your ability to live your dream may be closer than you think. You need dedication and perseverance, and you have to survive the doubts and criticisms of people closest to you, but you can make it to the “I Got It” stage. And when you do, you’ll share the opinion of Super Bowl-winning quarterback Joe Namath, who said, “When you win, nothing hurts.”

Some Others Fought It

Unfortunately, not everyone will want to celebrate with you when your dream begins to become a reality. I think you’ll find that people will fall into two groups:

1. *Firefighters*: These people want to put out the fire that you have for your dream. No matter what you’re for—they’re against it. The way these kinds of people criticize everything, you’d think they get paid for it. And nothing you do or say can change their attitude.
2. *Firelighters*: These people want to help you and are willing to do what they can to stoke the flames of your success even higher.

When you’re trying to realize your dream, sometimes you’ll be surprised by which people want to light your fire and which ones want to put it out. Some people you consider friends will fight your success. Others will support you in ways you didn’t expect. But no matter which people criticize you or how they do it, don’t let them take your focus off your dream.

I Taught It

Any dream worth living is worth sharing with others. After all, that’s a big part of what it means to be successful. But that’s not how everyone looks at it. I’ve observed that when people realize their dream, they react in one of two ways. Some hold the dream close, trying to keep all of it for themselves. When they do, their dream often shrinks. Because they haven’t shared it, they have to sustain it all by themselves. Everything depends on them. They don’t get the help of others, the benefits of teamwork, or the joy of sharing their blessings.

But the person who shares her dream gets to watch it grow. The synergy of shared ideas often takes it to a whole new level. The dream

becomes greater than the person launching it ever imagined it could be. And the others who participate in it often adopt it as their own dream.

When you are willing to share the dream by including others, there is almost no limit to what you can accomplish. The impossible comes within reach.

Others Bought It

If you live your dream and successfully share it, others will buy in to it. People have a desire to follow a leader with a great dream. Now more than ever, people are looking for heroes. Unfortunately, many are looking in places that are likely to leave them disappointed: sports, music, movies, and television. But real heroes are leaders who can help others achieve success, people who take others with them. And it all begins with a dream. As Winifred Newman said, “Vision is the world’s most desperate need. There are no hopeless situations, only people who think hopelessly.”

When I was a pastor, I did many things to share my dream with others. For a while, I even carried copies of a card that I would give to people to remind them of the importance of the dream and how much I wanted them to be a part of it. Here’s what it said:

I Have a Dream

History tells us that in every age there comes a time when leaders must come forth to meet the needs of the hour. Therefore, there is no potential leader who does not have an opportunity to better mankind. Those around him also have that same privilege. Fortunately, I believe that God has surrounded me with those who will accept the challenge of this hour.

My dream allows me to . . .

- Give up at any moment all that I am in order to receive all that I can become.
- Sense the invisible so I can do the impossible.
- Trust God’s resources since the dream is bigger than all my abilities and acquaintances.
- Continue when discouraged, for where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present.
- Attract winners because big dreams draw big people.
- See myself and my people in the future. Our dream is the

promise of what we shall one day be.

Yes, I have a dream. It's a God-given one. It is greater than any of my gifts. It is as large as the world, but it begins with one. Won't you join me?

Go for the Dream

If you haven't already discovered your dream, you're probably realizing how much you've been missing. A dream will provide you with a reason to go, a path to follow, and a target to hit. Besides, as Yogi Berra remarked, "If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else." Wouldn't you say it's about time you got started?

Several years ago, I saw a segment on television's *60 Minutes* in which then-anchor Mike Wallace was interviewing one of the Sherpa guides from Nepal who helps climbers reach the top of Mount Everest.

"Why do you do it?" Wallace asked.

"To help others do something they cannot do on their own," answered the guide.

"But there are so many risks, so many dangers," said Wallace. "Why do you insist on taking people to the top of the mountain?"

The guide smiled and said, "It's obvious that *you've* never been to the top."

Going to the top takes a dream and a strong commitment. The greater the journey, the more committed you have to be to take it. As you prepare to continue on your success journey, make a commitment to yourself to find your dream and follow it. The road that lies before you is one that I know well because I made that commitment and have traveled on the journey for more than forty years. I will travel alongside you until you are ready to carry on without me. But no matter how much help I can give, you won't make it without a commitment.

Take a look at the statement below. Examine what it will mean to commit yourself to the journey, and sign it. Then be prepared to begin living your dream.

Commitment to the Success Journey

I commit myself today to being successful. I recognize that success is a process, not a destination. I will discover my dream and do what I can to . . .

Know my purpose in life,
Grow to reach my maximum potential, and
Sow seeds that benefit others.

Although the road may get bumpy, and it may require me to learn a new way of looking at life, I will do what it takes and persevere. I will take the success journey.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The *potential* for greatness lives within each of us. The key to *achieving* greatness is found when we discover and then develop our dreams. You are on your way!

Steps to Take Along the Way

Where Would I Like To Go?

To get started on the success journey, the first step you need to take is to discover your dream. Set aside a block of time—several hours on a weekend or maybe even a day off from work or away from the kids—to work through the following material as honestly as you can.

1. **My Past:** No dream grows out of a vacuum. It grows out of a life. Henry Ford said, “Before anything else, getting ready is the secret of success.” Whether you know it or not, your life has been preparing you for your dream. Answer these questions to see how you’ve been prepared:

a) What are my greatest talents?

[Your Response]

b) What is my greatest character strength?

[Your Response]

c) What do others who have nothing to gain say that I’m good at?

[Your Response]

d) What have my unique life experiences prepared me to do?

[Your Response]

e) What is my greatest passion—the thing I love doing so much that I would gladly do it for free?

[Your Response]

f) What is so important to me that I would be willing to die for it?

[Your Response]

2. **My Present:** Some people look at their current circumstances and become discouraged because they're not where they want to be. But looking at the present is part of the process of discovering your dream. Answer the following questions to help you see the potential of the present:

a) What are all of my current resources? (Include time, money, people, opportunities, etc.)

[Your Response]

b) What current circumstances can I positively change to free up more resources or create more opportunities?

[Your Response]

c) What is unique to my current circumstances—my place in history, where I live, where I work, the people I know?

[Your Response]

3. **My Future:** I hope that you're beginning to see a pattern created by your past and present circumstances. Now it's time you asked yourself: If I could be anything I wanted, what would I be? Write that answer here:

In later chapters, we will talk about what it will take to start moving you closer to achieving your dream.

How Far Can I Go?

Whenever I travel to Washington, D.C., my favorite place to visit is the Smithsonian Institution. I have a small collection of items, including a video clip of a speech made by President John F. Kennedy to Congress on May 25, 1961. Every time I see it, I get goose bumps. It records the moment that Kennedy called America to execute the most incredible and improbable real-life journey ever conceived. He cast the vision for the achievement of an idea that had been written about as early as a.d. 160 by Greek satirist Lucian of Samosata and thought about for eighteen hundred years since then. Kennedy said, "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal before [the] decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth."

Back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, America was in a space race with the Soviet Union, and we were falling way behind. I was about ten years old when we heard that the USSR had launched the first satellite, *Sputnik*, into orbit. It felt like going to bed one night as the best athlete in your school and waking up the next morning only to find out that Babe Ruth was the new kid in class. What a shock! Then they launched *Sputnik II*, which carried the first space traveler, Laika the dog. And in 1959, they sent off *Luna I*, the first spacecraft to escape the earth's gravitational field and fly by the moon. The Soviets seemed to be landing one knockout punch after another. They also sent the first man into space, and one of their ships made the first orbit of the earth. The Soviets were winning.

In the midst of the hopelessness of the situation, President John F. Kennedy came forward, stood before the United States Congress, and said we would see a man on the moon by the end of the decade. Most people thought it was impossible. Even some of the people running NASA thought it couldn't be done. The technology required to make it happen didn't exist, and they weren't sure that it could exist. But that didn't stop Kennedy. He not only made the impossible our goal, but he

gave it a deadline.

Despite all the doubts, on July 16, 1969, *Apollo 11* lifted off from pad 39 at Kennedy Space Center and began a journey of 244,930 miles to the moon. Four days later, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin Jr. landed the lunar module *Eagle* on the surface of the moon, and 500 million people watched on television as Armstrong took his first step into the powder-fine gray dust of the moon and uttered his famous line, “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” We had done it. We had achieved the impossible! It’s unfortunate that President Kennedy didn’t live to see it.

Your Attitude Determines Your Altitude

That trip shouldn’t have been possible, but it happened. Incredibly, the Soviets (and now the Russians), who were so far ahead of us in 1961, still have not put anyone on the moon. What propelled us to accomplish such a feat—and in record time? It wasn’t the strength of our technology or the Cold War threat of Soviet superiority. We put people on the moon because we believed we could do it. In the blink of an eye, John F. Kennedy’s speech took the idea of a lunar landing from an impossible dream to an obtainable target. It hardly mattered where we were technologically. A moon landing became a reality because of a change in *attitude*. You see, when our attitudes outdistance our abilities, even the impossible becomes possible.

I’ve talked to people who worked in the space program, and they have told me that the atmosphere was electric with expectation back then. Every day as they worked, one thought was foremost in their minds: *We’re putting a man on the moon!* The president’s goal contained the dream and prompted the positive attitude needed to make it happen.

That’s the power of a dream *coupled* with the right attitude. If you have one without the other, you can’t go very far on the journey.

- A dream without a positive attitude produces a daydreamer.
- A positive attitude without a dream produces a pleasant person who can’t progress.
- A dream together with a positive attitude produces a person with unlimited possibilities and potential.

To go far (and in the right direction), you need both. Kennedy

knew that.

A dream by itself won't do it. In fact, your attitude isn't just a necessary contributor for you to be successful. Your attitude—not intelligence, talent, education, technical ability, opportunity, or even hard work—is the main factor that determines whether you will live your dream. Attitude determines how far you can go on the success journey.

Who and Where You Are Today Result from Your Attitude

Your attitude not only directs your future but also affects who you are today. The choices you've made up to now have come as the result of your attitude. Your attitude determines your actions, and your actions determine your accomplishment. You may or may not like to think about it, but the person you are and where you are today are the result of your attitude.

When you're born, everything is out of your control: You don't choose who your biological parents are, when and where you're born, or any of your circumstances. But as you grow older, you start making decisions, and you become accountable for what happens in your life. In adolescence, the number of decisions you make multiplies, and by about the time you reach the end of your second decade, your choices are all your own, whether you like to admit it or not. Right now, if you're over twenty-one, you're completely responsible for your choices—and your attitude.

Your Current Attitude Is a Choice

Most people with bad attitudes usually point to something other than themselves to explain their problems. But you can't rightfully blame your attitude on anything or anyone but yourself. It's not what happens *to* you but what happens *in* you that counts. Your attitude is not based on:

- *Circumstances*: You may not be able to control what happens to you, but you are completely responsible for your reaction to what happens to you.
- *Upbringing*: The past is gone and outside your control. You are responsible for not allowing it to control you in the present.

- *Limitations*: Since everyone faces limitations of some kind—whether lack of talent, limited money, few opportunities, or poor appearance—you need to learn to live with them. As Robert Schuller said, your limitations should be guidelines, not stop signs. They should direct and guide your path on the journey, not prevent you from taking it.
- *Others*: No one but you is responsible for the choices you make today. You may have been hurt or abused in the past, but it's up to you to overcome that injury—just as you would a physical one—and move beyond it.

The truth is that anyone, no matter how *good* the circumstances are, can find a reason to have a negative attitude. And everyone, no matter how *bad* the circumstances are, can find a way to maintain a good attitude.

In his book *Go for the Magic*, Pat Williams recounted a story told by St. Louis sportswriter Bob Broeg about baseball Hall of Fame player Stan Musial, who was known as one of the game's most consistent players. One day when Musial was playing for the St. Louis Cardinals, a teammate came into the clubhouse whistling. He turned to Stan and said, "I feel great. My home life is happy. I'm in a groove. I feel like I'm going to get two hits today. Ever feel like that, Stan?"

Smiling, Musial looked at him and said, "Every day!"

One of the greatest discoveries you can ever make is that you can change. No matter where you were yesterday or how negative your attitudes have been in the past, you can be more positive today. And that makes an incredible difference in your potential and your life.

Your Attitude Determines How You Approach the Journey

Several years ago, an experiment was performed in a school in the San Francisco Bay area. A principal called in three teachers and said, "Because you three teachers are the finest in the system and you have the greatest expertise, we're going to give you ninety selected high-IQ students. We're going to let you move these students through this next year at their pace and see how much they can learn."

The three faculty members, the students, and the students' parents thought it was a great idea. And they all especially enjoyed the school year. By the time school ended, the students had achieved from 20 to 30 percent more than the other students in the entire San Francisco

Bay area.

At the end of the year, the principal called in the three teachers and told them, “I have a confession to make. You did not have ninety of the most intellectually prominent students. They were run-of-the-mill students. We took ninety students at random from the system and gave them to you.”

The teachers naturally concluded that their exceptional teaching skills must have been responsible for the students’ great progress.

“I have another confession,” said the principal. “You’re not the brightest of the teachers. Your names were the first three drawn out of a hat.”

Why, then, did the students and teachers perform at such an exceptional level for an entire year? The answer can be found in their attitudes. They had an attitude of positive expectation—the teachers and students believed in themselves and one another. They performed well because they believed they could.¹

Your attitude toward life determines life’s attitude toward you. How you think affects your approach to the success journey in a powerful way.

*What I believe about life determines How I perceive
life, which determines What I receive from life.*

If you expect the worst, you will certainly get it. If you expect the best, even when negative circumstances come your way—and they will, because a positive attitude doesn’t stop them—you can make the best of it and keep going.

The Better Your Attitude Is, the Farther You Will Go

If you talk to people in the top organizations across the country, the higher you go, the better the attitudes you’ll discover. A Fortune 500 study found that 94 percent of all the executives surveyed attributed their success more to attitude than any other factor.² That just goes to show you that if you want to go far, have a good attitude.

Attitude affects more than just your ability to succeed in business. It affects every aspect of your life—even your health. I once read an article about a study at King’s College Hospital in London, England. It was conducted among cancer patients who had undergone mastectomies. Researchers at the hospital tracked the progress of fifty-

seven women. Of the ones who had a positive attitude when they were diagnosed with cancer, seven out of ten were alive ten years later. But of the ones who felt a sense of hopelessness during diagnosis, eight of ten had died.³ And ongoing medical research continues to present similar findings. You can go a lot farther in life—and live longer—with a good attitude than you can without one.

Your Attitude Means the Difference Between Success and Failure

A good attitude makes it possible for you to be successful. It gives you fuel so that you want to pursue your purpose, grow to your potential, and sow seeds benefiting others. It can give you the staying power to improve. But it also makes the journey more enjoyable along the way—no matter where it takes you. As former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden said, “Things turn out the best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.”

Awhile back I was playing golf with my friend Zig Ziglar, one of the most positive people I’ve ever met. And he told me a story about a boy named Jeb. Every day when Jeb was growing up, his mother would come into his room and wake him at 5:30, saying, “Jeb, it’s going to be a great day.”

But that wasn’t what the boy wanted to hear at that time in the morning. It was his job every day to go outside first thing and get coal to start the fire and heat the house. And he hated it. One day when she came in and said, “It’s going to be a great day,” Jeb snapped, “No, Mom, it’s going to be a lousy day. I’m tired. The house is cold. And I don’t want to get up and get the coal. It’s a crummy day!”

“Sweetheart,” she replied, “I didn’t know you felt that way. Why don’t you just go back to bed and get some more sleep?”

Jeb thought he had hit pay dirt. “Why didn’t I think of this before?” he asked himself.

He woke up about two hours later. The house was warm, and he could smell breakfast cooking. He rolled out of bed, put on his clothes, and went out to the kitchen table. “Boy, am I hungry,” he said. “I’m all rested up. Breakfast is already cooked. This is great.”

“Sweetheart,” his mother said, “you don’t get any food today. Remember how you said it was going to be a terrible day? As your mother, I’m going to do my best to make it a terrible day for you. You go back to your bedroom and stay there all day. You’re not allowed to

come out, and you don't get anything to eat. I'll see you tomorrow morning at 5:30."

Jeb walked dejectedly back to his room and got into bed. And he was able to go back to sleep—for about an hour. But there was only so much sleeping a person could do. He spent the day moping around his room, getting hungrier and hungrier. And when it finally got dark, he went back to bed again and tried to sleep.

He woke up hours before daylight, and he put on his clothes. He was sitting on the edge of the bed when his mother opened the door to his room at 5:30. Before she could say a word, Jeb jumped up and said, "Mom, it's going to be a great day!"

What was true for Jeb is also true for you. You can change your attitude. You may not be able to change other things about yourself, but you can definitely make your attitude more positive. If you try, you'll soon discover that the best helping hand is at the end of your own arm.

Seven Signs of a Great Attitude

What does it mean to have a great attitude? You've probably heard the old expression that a positive person sees a glass as half full instead of half empty. That's true, but it tells only a small part of the story. I believe positive people share seven qualities:

1. Belief in Self

Herb True observed, "Many people succeed when others do not believe in them. But rarely does a person succeed when he does not believe in himself." He was exactly right. Positive self-worth is a prime characteristic of a person with a good attitude.

Anyone who doesn't believe in herself expects the worst not only of herself but also of others. If you have low self-confidence, you will likely have to struggle to focus on anything but yourself because you will always be worried about how you look, what others think about you, and whether you're going to fail. But when you believe in yourself, you're free to see yourself in a more objective light and focus on improving yourself and reaching your potential. And that makes all the difference.

2. Willingness to See the Best in Others

I've never known a positive person yet who didn't love people and try to see the good in them. And an effective way to help you see the

best in others is to do what I call putting a “10” on people’s heads. Here’s what I mean: We all have expectations of others. But we can choose whether the expectations are negative or positive. We can think that others are totally worthless or absolutely wonderful. When we make the decision to expect the best, and we look for the good instead of the bad, we’re seeing them as a “10.”

The ability to do this with others is significant for a couple of reasons. First, you usually see in others what you expect to see. If you constantly expect and see good things in others, it’s much easier to maintain a positive attitude. Second, people generally rise to meet your level of expectation. If you treat them positively, they tend to treat you the same way. If you expect them to get the job done and you show your confidence in them, they usually succeed. And on the relatively rare occasions when people don’t treat you well, it’s easy for you not to take their behavior personally because you know you have done your best, and you can move on without letting it affect your attitude.

3. Ability to See Opportunity Everywhere

Greek philosopher Plutarch wrote, “As bees extract honey from thyme, the strongest and driest of herbs, so sensible men often get advantage and profit from the most awkward circumstances.” No matter what the circumstances, positive people see opportunities everywhere. They understand that opportunities aren’t based on luck or position. They are the result of the right attitude. Opportunity exists where you find it.

4. Focus on Solutions

Likewise, people with a positive attitude focus their time and attention on solutions, not problems. Just about anybody can see problems. That doesn’t take anything special. But positive people maintain a solution mind-set, seeing a solution in every problem and a possibility in every impossibility.

5. Desire to Give

Nothing has as much positive impact on people as giving to others. Karl Menninger, psychiatrist, author, and one of the founders of the Menninger Foundation, said, “Generous people are rarely mentally ill people.” And they are also rarely negative people. People who have a giving spirit are some of the most positive people I know, because giving is the highest level of living. They focus their time and energy on what they can give to others rather than what they can get from

them. And the more people give, the better their attitudes.

Most unsuccessful people don't understand this concept. They believe that how much people give and their attitudes about it are based on how much they have. But that's not true. I know many people who have very little but are tremendous givers. And I know people who have been blessed with money, good families, and wonderful careers who are stingy and suspicious of others. It's not what you have that makes a difference. It's what you do with what you have. And that is based completely on attitude.

6. Persistence

Don B. Owens Jr. stated, "Many people fail in life because they believe in the adage: If you don't succeed, try something else. But success eludes those who follow such advice . . . The dreams that have come true did so because people stuck to their ambitions. They refused to be discouraged. They never let disappointment get the upper hand. Challenges only spurred them on to greater effort." Those characteristics—the ability to stick with it, overcome discouragement, and keep going in the face of disappointment—are all the results of a good attitude.

When you have a positive attitude, it's easier to be persistent. If you think success is just around the corner, you keep going. When you believe everything turns out for the best, you don't mind a little discomfort. And when everything goes haywire, you remain persistent if you have a positive attitude; after all, you believe help is already on the way.

7. Responsibility for Their Lives

The final characteristic of positive people is their willingness to take responsibility for their own lives. Unsuccessful people duck responsibility. But a successful person understands that nothing positive happens until you're willing to step forward and take full responsibility for your thoughts and actions. Only when you're responsible for yourself can you look at yourself honestly, assess your strengths and weaknesses, and begin to change.

Top Tips for Getting Your Attitude in Tip-Top Shape

If I could share only one thing that I possess, it would be my way of thinking, for that more than anything else has helped me the most on

the success journey. Attitude has always been my greatest asset, and it can be yours too. Andrew Carnegie asserted, “The man who acquires the ability to take full possession of his own mind may take possession of anything else to which he is justly entitled.”

If you’re constantly in a battle to keep your attitude positive, you can use some help. Here are some tips to assist you in taking full possession of your mind and making your thinking positively powerful:

Claim Responsibilities, Not Rights

A predominant source of discontent among people is caused by their fight to secure their rights. Think about your situation. Have you ever been wronged? Have there been times when you haven’t gotten everything you deserved? Your answer to these questions is almost certainly yes. We live in an imperfect world, and because of that, as long as we live, we won’t see a time when everything we do is rewarded justly.

So you’re faced with a decision. Are you going to spend your time and energy on *what should have been*, or are you going to focus on *what can be*? Even when truth and justice are on your side, you may never be able to right your wrongs. Continually fighting for your rights in an imperfect world can make you resentful, angry, hateful, and bitter. These destructive emotions sap your energy and make you negative. And besides, when you focus on your rights, you’re often looking backward rather than forward. You can’t make any progress when you’re facing the wrong way. Glenn Clark remarked, “If you wish to travel far and fast, travel light. Take off all your envies, jealousies, unforgiveness, selfishness, and fears.”

Associate with Positive People

Charles “Tremendous” Jones said that the only difference between who you are today and the person you will be in five years will come from the books you read and the people you associate with. Who you spend your time with especially influences your attitude. The old adage is true: birds of a feather do flock together.

Think about the people you spend your time with. Although you are born into a family, and you may not be able to choose the people you work with, you can choose your closest friends. If you choose negative friends, you are also choosing to have a negative attitude. But when you spend time with positive people, you help yourself to see things in a better light. Henry Ford maintained, “My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me.” Think about what your friends bring out in you, and if it’s not your best, it might be time for you to

make some changes.

Don't Take Yourself Too Seriously

I heard a story about three business professionals who were comparing ideas on what it meant to be a success. "I'd say I had arrived," said the first, "if I were summoned to the White House for a private, personal meeting with the president of the United States."

"To me," said the second person, "success would mean meeting with the president in the Oval Office, having the hot line ring during our talk, and watching the president ignore it."

"No, you've both got it wrong," said the third one. "You're a success if you're privately consulting with the president, the hot line rings, he picks it up, and he says, 'It's for you.'"

The problem with many unsuccessful people is that they take themselves too seriously. They think of success in the same way the three people in the story did. But success depends more on your attitude than it does on how important you think you are. Life should be fun. Even if your job is important and should be taken seriously, that doesn't mean you should take *yourself* seriously. You'll go farther in life and have a better time doing it if you maintain a sense of humor, especially when it comes to yourself.

Take Action to Change Your Attitude

The quality of your life and the duration of your success journey depend on your attitude, and you are the only person in this world with the power to make it better. Dr. William Glasser maintained, "If you want to change attitudes, start with a change in behavior. In other words, begin to act the part, as well as you can, of the person you would rather be, the person you most want to become. Gradually, the old, fearful person will fade away."

Change requires action. Most people wait until they feel like it to change their attitudes. But that only causes them to keep waiting because they have the whole process backward. If you wait until you *feel like it* to try to change your attitude, you will never change. You have to *act* yourself into changing.

*An act of your will Will
lead you to action;
And your positive action
Will lead to a positive attitude!*

According to Henry Ford, "Whether you think you can or think you

can't—you are right." The mind, more than anything else, determines how far you can go on the success journey.

Steps to Take Along the Way

How Far Can I Go?

Now is a good time to take a look at your attitude. Respond to the following questions and statements as honestly as you can.

1. ***Rights or Responsibilities:*** Which am I more likely to think and talk to others about? If the answer is "rights," what can I do to change that attitude?

[Your Response]

2. ***People:*** Who is the most positive person I know? Write his or her name below. Make an appointment to talk to that person and ask what he or she does to remain positive.

[Your Response]

3. ***Stress:*** Name some positive ways you can relieve stress, and schedule some time in the next week to do at least one of them:

[Your Response]

4. ***Humor:*** During the next week, tell at least one person a funny story about something that you recently did wrong or an incident that made you look foolish. Enjoy the joke together. (If the person is a friend and looks shocked or uncomfortable, you may have a history of taking yourself too seriously.)

[Your Response]

5. ***Attitude Statement:*** Write a positive attitude creed for yourself, stating your intention to become a positive person.

[Your Response]

How Do I Get There from Here?

When was the last time you went for a Sunday drive? That's not a very popular activity these days, but for a while it was growing up. And it was the favorite activity of the Raimeys, some wonderful neighbors I had as a kid. Mr. Raimey would say, "Come on, everybody. Let's pack up the car and go for a ride," as he rounded up the family and occasionally a neighbor kid like me who was playing over at their house. And off we would go. We lived in Circleville, Ohio, and our Sunday drives would take us to exotic places such as Lancaster, Chillicothe, or even Columbus. It seemed like a great adventure. Mr. Raimey would drive the dirt roads and highways that wound through the farms and fields of central Ohio. We never knew for sure what we might see.

Those Sunday drives were fun. And if we were lucky, as we would come across a little country store on the highway, Mr. Raimey would stop the car, and we would all pile out so that he and Mrs. Raimey could buy each of us a Coke or an ice cream. It was a wonderful way to spend an afternoon. But to tell you the truth, over the years, I've met a lot of people who treat *life* a lot like a Sunday drive. They seem to be saying, "Let's just go and we'll see where we end up." They're willing to let life take them anywhere it wants to. I'm no scientist, but I've noticed that gravity tends to pull everything downward. And without some planning and direction, a person's life can do the same thing.

I love a good adventure as much as anyone, but I'm not willing to risk squandering my potential or not fulfilling my purpose by sitting back passively and letting things happen any old way. Life is not a dress rehearsal. We get one chance, and if we don't make the most of it, we can do nothing to get our time back and try again.

That's one of the reasons my wife, Margaret, and I are planners. We believe in preparation for many things in life, including taking a trip. We map out our whole itinerary because we already know about

the places we want to go, the stores where we want to shop, and even some of the places we want to eat.

Most travelers are only marginally organized when they take a trip. They usually get to the airport in their destination city, gather their luggage, try to get directions to their hotel, check in, get their belongings squared away, and rest up. Then they take time to think about what they want to do first. By the time they get started with the fun, they have already lost a big part of their day.

In contrast, when Margaret and I travel, we have a system where we split up the duties so that we can get out of any airport quickly. And while the other travelers from our flight are trying to figure out where to pick up their luggage, we're already halfway to our first sightseeing destination.

That kind of planning has always paid off. We always make the most of every moment. Whenever we talk to our friends about places in common where we've traveled, we usually find that we've taken in most of the sights they have plus a handful of other interesting places they wished they hadn't missed.

If planning can bring so many rewards, imagine the power of planning the success journey. Without planning, your progress in life will be like that of a Sunday driver, who may see a few interesting sights but misses out on the truly incredible journey that could have been his.

Types of “Travelers”

As I talked to people about travel while working on this book, I asked them about their method of travel planning. I found out that at one time or another, nearly everyone had been on a trip organized by someone else—a travel agent, relative, church group, or employer—but nearly all of them preferred to do most of the planning themselves. Some, like Stephanie Wetzels, have been on poorly organized trips both in and out of the country and have vowed to do all their own future planning.

The more confident travelers are, the more likely they are to do more of their planning. But remarkably, when it comes to planning the journey of life, people are very different. Did you know that most people give more time to planning their vacations than they do to planning their lives? Based on the way people spend their planning time, you'd think they put in two weeks on the job each year and fifty on vacation.

If you look at how people approach the planning process for the

journey of life, I think you'll see that they fall into one of these categories:

- *Vince the Victim*: Vince is very quick to tell you that it's not his fault that he isn't getting anywhere in life. He doesn't make any plans because he is busy focusing his time and energy on things outside his control—often from his past. He frequently blames others for his lack of progress and seems to be more concerned with finding excuses for failing than with seizing opportunities to grow. In his opinion, everyone and everything other than himself has made him who he is today.
- *Foot-Dragging Freddie*: Freddie isn't worried too much about the past, and he doesn't want to think about the future. He is focused on the present. In fact, he loves the present so much that he is willing to do almost anything to maintain the status quo. He hates change and avoids it at all costs. If he is making any plans, they're to keep things the way they are.
- *Debbie the Dreamer*: Debbie loves to plan, and she spends a lot of her time doing that. The problem is that she never turns her plans into action. She often has great ideas and says she wants to be successful, but she doesn't want to take any risks. She is not willing to pay the price required to move forward on the success journey.
- *Motivated Michael*: Finally, there is Michael. He focuses the majority of his time on the present, doing his best to maximize his potential. But one reason he is so effective today is that he spent a portion of his time yesterday planning. As a result, he is focused on his purpose, he is growing toward his potential, and he is sowing seeds that benefit others out of the positive overflow in his life.

Goals Create a Route for Success

What separates a “Motivated Michael” from all the others? The answer is that he has goals. He has identified what he wants to accomplish to fulfill his purpose and maximize his potential. You see, on the success journey, the goals you set become your route. And to make progress, you need that—not because you're hoping or expecting to reach some final destination, but because it shows you *how to take the journey*. On the success journey, the first part of the trip is just as important as the last part. The main thing is to be constantly moving *toward* your destination. And setting goals is the best way to make sure that

continues to happen.

Think about what is involved in taking a long trip by car. Let's say, for example, you decide to go to Chicago from Dallas. If you've never taken that trip before, you wouldn't hop in the car and say, "I know Chicago is north of Dallas, so I'll take the first road I can find that goes north and start driving." That wouldn't make any sense at all. No, first you'd look at a map, consider the routes you could take, and decide on the best one, based on what kinds of roads you want to travel and what you'd like to see along the way.

The journey doesn't take care of itself. You have to plan it. If you just start driving, there is no telling where you'll end up. But when you plan ahead and know where you're going, you can successfully make the journey, and you can do it in good time and enjoy the trip along the way.

Taking the success journey requires the same attention to detail that a trip to Chicago would. It needs to be broken down into smaller segments to be more manageable. Goals are like points on a travel plan. Each one leads to the next and takes you farther in the right direction. Together, they set you on a course that leads toward your destination. And if you take a wrong turn along the way, you know it and can easily make adjustments to get back on track.

When you have a plan and know where you're going, you can avoid the situation that Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes found himself in, according to a story I once heard. Apparently, Holmes had misplaced his ticket while traveling on a train. He searched for it, obviously irritated, as the conductor stood by waiting. Finally, the train official told Holmes, "Your Honor, if you do not find your ticket, you can simply mail it to the railroad. We know and trust you."

Holmes replied, "I am not so concerned about your getting my ticket. I just want to know where I'm going."

Goals take care of that kind of problem because they make it possible for you to always know where you're going. With them, you will be able to fulfill your purpose in life and live your dream. Here are some of the ways goals do that:

Goals Draw Out Your Sense of Purpose

The number of people today who lack a strong sense of purpose is astounding. Unfortunately, lack of direction seems to be growing, not decreasing. Pulitzer prize-winning writer Katherine Anne Porter observed, "I am appalled at the aimlessness of most people's lives. Fifty percent don't pay any attention to where they are going; forty percent are undecided and will go in any direction. Only ten percent

know what they want, and even all of them don't go toward it."

Goals give you something concrete to focus on, and that has a positive impact on your actions. As James Allen said, "You will become as small as your controlling desire, as great as your dominant aspiration." Goals help you focus your attention on your purpose and make it your dominant aspiration. They help you know where you're going.

Goals Give You "Go"

Millionaire industrialist Andrew Carnegie said, "You cannot push anyone up the ladder unless he is willing to climb himself." The same is true of a person on the success journey: she won't go forward unless she is motivated to do so. Goals can help provide that motivation. Paul Myer commented, "No one ever accomplishes anything of consequence without a goal . . . Goal setting is the strongest human force for self-motivation."

Think about it. What is one of the greatest motivators in the world? Success. When you take a large activity (such as your dream) and break it down into smaller, more manageable parts (goals), you set yourself up for success because you make what you want to accomplish obtainable. And each time you accomplish a small goal, you experience success. That's motivating! Accomplish enough of the small goals, and you'll be taking a major step toward achieving your purpose and developing your potential.

Goals not only help you develop initial motivation by making your dreams obtainable, but they also help you continue to be motivated—and that creates momentum. Once you get going on the success journey, it will be very hard to stop you. The process is similar to what happens with a train. Getting it started is the toughest part of its trip. While standing still, a train can be prevented from moving forward by one-inch blocks of wood under each of the locomotive's drive wheels. However, once a train gets up to speed, not even a steel-reinforced concrete wall five feet thick can stop it.

Goals Get Your Focus on Improvement, Not Activity

As I've mentioned before, most unsuccessful people cling to the idea that success is a destination. By now, you're beginning to see that success truly is a journey. But don't allow that knowledge to make you believe that activity alone can make you successful. It doesn't. The real key to success and to reaching your potential lies in your ability to continually improve. Activity alone does nothing for you. It can distract you from reaching your potential if it becomes a substitute for improvement. But when you set the right goals and work to reach

them instead of simply staying busy, improvement is not only obtainable—it's inevitable.

Goals Create Mile Markers of Progress

I mentioned before that when you have goals, you are quickly able to know when you have gotten off track. Each time you reach a goal, you can not only tell that you're making progress, but you can also see *how far* you have traveled. Goals are like mile markers on the success journey.

People have an innate need to know what kind of progress they're making. Margaret and I got to see a vivid example of this when we took a long flight together to Asia. While we were on the plane, the screens that ordinarily show movies and preflight safety information were used to project a large map of the world, and they showed the current position of our plane. As time went by, and we watched the little plane on the screen make its way across the Pacific Ocean, we had a visual reminder of how much progress we were making.

Creating Your Own Road Map

When you commit yourself to your dream and express it in achievable goals, you provide yourself with a visual reminder of where you're going and how you hope to get there. It's part of the success process:

Your dream determines your goals.

Your goals map out your actions.

Your actions create results.

And the results bring you success.

To make the success journey, you have to start with a dream. But that dream will become a reality only if you bridge the gap between intentions and actions by identifying a series of goals.

So how do you get started in the process of plotting goals on your road map for success? Just follow this *ROAD MAP*:

Recognize Your Dream

Everything starts with your dream. It's an expression of your life purpose and determines what it means for you to reach your potential. If you can articulate your dream clearly, then you can create a map for your journey. If you can't, the trip will be nearly impossible. If you have completed the questions in the "Steps to Take Along the Way"

section at the end of chapter 2, then you're ready to begin the process of plotting your road map. If you haven't, go back and do it now. You won't be successful until you know where you want to go. As President Woodrow Wilson stated, "We grow by dreams."

Observe Your Starting Place

It's true that you can't begin the success journey until you know where you want to go. But you also can't be successful if you don't know where you're starting from. Both pieces of information are necessary to make the trip. As Eric Hoffer, known as the "longshoreman philosopher," said, "To become *different* from what we are, we must have some *awareness* of what we are" (emphasis added).

Start by examining yourself as honestly as you can. Look at your strengths, weaknesses, experiences, education, and resources. Once you have a sense of where you are, ask yourself the following questions:

- *How great a distance will I have to travel?* If your dream is to earn enough money to retire in ten years, then you need to calculate exactly how much money you will need to earn to be able to achieve your goal. If your goal is to become a nurse or an engineer, then you need to contact universities to get information on programs of study, tuition costs, admission policies, and so on. No matter what you want to do, you will have to travel some distance to make it happen. You need to know how much ground you'll have to cover.
- *What do I have working for me?* No matter where you're starting from on your journey, you have some things going for you. If your dream is to own a business, a skill such as a knack for handling money will be an asset. If success to you means raising your children well, and you love kids and have the ability to teach, you're ahead of the game. Look for the things that are going to give you a head start. And don't just look at inherent abilities. Look at your circumstances, resources, and contacts.
- *What must I overcome?* You will also have some things working against you. If your dream requires you to get a college degree but you have trouble reading, that's an obstacle you're going to have to overcome. If your desire is to play professional football, but you're only five feet three inches tall and weigh 130 pounds, your physique is definitely going to work against you. No matter what your goal, hoping that your shortcomings will go away isn't going to help. You have to take an honest look at where you're starting and be prepared to overcome the obstacles.

- *What will it cost to make the trip?* Every journey has costs associated with it. These costs may be in terms of time, energy, finances, choices, sacrifices, or a combination of factors. You will have to decide whether you're willing to pay that price. (Chapter 7 deals with this in more depth.)

As you think about your dream and measure it against your starting place, you will be able to define it more precisely. You will begin to get a clearer picture of what's important to you and what you're willing to give—and give up—to be successful. And you will be in a better position to identify specific goals.

Articulate a Statement of Purpose

Once you've given more thought to your dream, and it has started to become clearer in your mind, you're ready to take another step: writing a statement of purpose for yourself based on your dream and what you intend to be doing while you're going in that direction. I guess you could call it your philosophy of travel for the success journey. Begin with the general definition of success that I gave you in chapter 1: success is knowing your purpose in life, growing to reach your maximum potential, and sowing seeds that benefit others. Then build on it. Your goal is to end up with a single concise statement that expresses what you want to do in your life. Your definition of success, your goals, and 80 percent of your daily activities should fall within the context of your purpose statement.

Here are a few purpose statements as examples so that you'll know what I mean:

Management expert Bob Buford: "My life mission is: To transform the latent energy in American Christianity into active energy."¹

Attorney/writer Freya Ottem Hansom: To offer compassionate, complete, competent services in her law practice, to write words that inspire God-pleasing changes in others, and to make her life be such that she lives to bless humankind.²

Your purpose statement should naturally grow out of your dreams, values, and convictions. So creating it isn't a quick, onetime event. Instead, most people develop and then refine it over the course of a couple of years. As you write yours, remember not to expect perfection the first time around. Write it the best you can, and plan to make changes later as you discover more about yourself and refine the vision for your life.

Define Your Goals

Once you have articulated your purpose, you're ready to identify

your goals—your points of reference on your road map. They will be activities or accomplishments that you plan to complete to fulfill your purpose, develop your potential, and help others. Use the following guidelines to keep your goals on target. Goals must be

- *Written:* A goal properly set is halfway reached, and a goal written is set. The process of writing down goals helps you to clarify what you intend to do, understand the importance of your goals, and commit yourself to making them happen. Writing your goals also makes you more accountable.
- *Personal:* A common mistake that people make is to identify something outside their control as a goal. For instance, many people say their goal is to win the lottery. Or they say they want their spouses to treat them better. But they have no control over these things. To be legitimate, a goal must be within your power to achieve or accomplish personally. As you write each goal, make sure it passes the test.
- *Specific:* The key to making a goal obtainable is to make it specific. Think about what would happen if you went into a restaurant and told your waiter, “I’d like food, please,” when he took your order. There is no telling what you would get. The same is true when you set a goal. You have to spell out what you intend to do. And if a goal is big, break it down into smaller, more manageable tasks. You can’t do what you can’t express specifically.
- *Achievable:* Successful people set goals just out of reach, but not out of sight. University of South Carolina professor William Mobley said, “One of the most important things about golf is the presence of clear goals. You see the pins, you know the par—it’s neither too easy nor unattainable, you know your average score, and there are competitive goals.” As you identify your goals, you’ll want to identify activities that will require you to work and stretch. But never put them so far out of your reach that you can’t achieve them. You’ll be discouraged by identifying a goal for yourself that you can’t accomplish. Goals need to be motivating, not intimidating.
- *Measurable:* Goals have value only if they help you improve yourself and develop your potential. That’s why they must be measurable. State your goals as objectively as possible so that you will be able to answer with a simple yes or no when you ask yourself the question, “Have I achieved this goal?”
- *Time-sensitive:* A goal has been called a dream with a deadline. That’s because without some kind of deadline, most goals never

go from dream to reality. As you articulate each goal, write a completion date for it. If you don't, you can get into trouble.

Move into Action

German poet and novelist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said, "Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one's thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world." Maybe that's why so few people follow through and act on their goals. According to Gregg Harris, two-thirds of people surveyed (sixty-seven of one hundred) set goals for themselves. But of those sixty-seven, only ten have made realistic plans to reach their goals. And out of those ten, only two follow through and actually make them happen.³

The trick to acting on your goals is getting started. President Franklin D. Roosevelt remarked, "It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something." That's good advice. You don't have to be perfect; you only need to make progress. Or as the Chinese proverb asserts, "Be not afraid of going slowly; be only afraid of standing still."

Adjust Your Plans

As you act on your goals, you will need to continually review them and your progress in order to make adjustments. Some goals won't really contribute to your dream or purpose and will need to be eliminated. Others will need to be modified. And in some cases, you'll simply fail. But as President Abraham Lincoln said, "My great concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure."

As you work on achieving your goals, think about this: although you should strive to write a purpose statement for yourself that will last a lifetime, you should plan to review and update goals on an almost continual basis.

Point to Success and Celebrate

Finally, as you accomplish some of your goals, take the time to celebrate. You deserve it. Acknowledge your successes and build on them, always keeping in mind that your aim is not to achieve all your goals but to improve constantly. Nobel prize-winning novelist William Faulkner urged, "Always dream and shoot higher than you know you can do. Don't bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself." You're trying to fulfill your purpose, move toward your potential, and help others—not arrive at a destination.

Retail department store founder J. C. Penney declared, “Give me a stock clerk with a goal and I will give you a man who will make history. Give me a man without a goal and I will give you a stock clerk.” Penney recognized the power and importance of goals. While you work on them, they work on you. And what you *get* by reaching your goals is not nearly as important as what you *become* by reaching them. In the case of Penney, he did more than become wealthy by building a chain of 1,600 retail stores with sales topping \$4 billion. He developed his potential and that of others, giving generously to charities and helping the people who worked for him. After he took his company public in 1927, he gave shares of stock to all the managers in the company and included every employee in profit sharing. It’s evident that he found his purpose, grew to his potential, and sowed seeds to benefit others. He truly was successful.

Over the years as I’ve set goals, I’ve always done so loosely. I never know what’s going to happen, and I need to be flexible. In my life I’ve been incredibly blessed. I feel that God has been very good to me. I never expected to write a bunch of books or speak to thousands of people each year, but that’s what I do. My desire has always been to make a difference in people’s lives, and I have been allowed to do that. Anytime I’ve identified a major goal in my life, my greatest expectations have been exceeded.

As you explore your dream, ponder your purpose, and identify your goals, be prepared for wonderful things to happen. There is no telling what will happen to you on the success journey. Your life may ultimately exceed your expectations. But you have to begin somewhere to accomplish your dream, and setting goals is a great place to start.

Steps to Take Along the Way

How Do I Get There from Here?

Begin creating the road map for your success journey.

1. ***Recognize Your Dream:*** Go back to the end of chapter 2 and look at your answer to question number 3 (If I could be anything I wanted, what would I be?). Write that answer here:

[Your Response]

2. ***Observe Your Starting Place:*** Give some thought to where you’re

currently starting and how far you are from your dream. Even if it seems like a long way, don't get discouraged. Some people have traveled incredibly long distances to get where they are today. Answer the following questions:

[Your Response]

- a) How great a distance will you have to travel? Write a statement that describes how far you will have to go to live your dream and affirms your determination to dedicate yourself to that task:

[Your Response]

- b) What do you have working for you? What are your three greatest assets for these goals?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)

[Your Response]

- c) What will you have to overcome? What three things that you can control stand between you and the achievement of your dream?

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)

[Your Response]

- d) What will it cost you to make the trip? What will you have to pay or sacrifice to accomplish your dream?

- (1) In money:
- (2) In time:
- (3) In relationships:
- (4) In present job/career:
- (5) In comforts/luxuries:
- (6) In other options:

[Your Response]

3. ***Articulate a Statement of Purpose:*** Write a statement of purpose based on all the work you've done up to this point:

[Your Response]

4. ***Define Your Goals Based on Your Purpose:*** Write the primary goals that you will need to accomplish to fulfill your dream and live your purpose statement on a daily basis:

[Your Response]



PART 2



GROWING TO YOUR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL



What Should I Pack in My Suitcase?

Have you ever watched people pack for a long trip? Others, like my sister Trish, seem to pack the entire closet. I remember one time my wife, Margaret, and I were preparing to go to the airport to pick up Trish and her husband, Steve, who were coming to San Diego for a one-week visit. I told Margaret, “We’d better both drive. You know how Trish is. We won’t be able to fit all the luggage in one car.” And sure enough, when we picked them up, we needed both cars to hold all the luggage—and one was a Lincoln Town Car with a cavernous trunk.

I do a lot of traveling as a speaker, and it seems that I’m always preparing for a trip. During one ten-year stretch, I logged more than 2.5 million air miles—just on one airline. But I’m fortunate because Margaret helps me when I’m getting ready to leave for a trip. I usually let her know what kinds of speaking engagements and commitments I’m going to have, and she’ll pack all my clothes and the other personal things I’ll need.

But I go through another packing process before I take any trip: I pack my briefcase. You see, I always work when I travel. I write, read, review reports, and do similar tasks. I’m always amazed when I get on a plane and start laying out my work and see a businessperson sitting next to me staring out the window. I can’t believe he has nothing to do, and I’m always tempted to say, “Hey, since you’re not busy, can I give you a couple of things to do for me before the plane lands in Dallas?”

Even without enlisting the help of others, I’m able to get a tremendous amount of work done on the road because I have a secret: I dedicate several hours to packing my briefcase before I leave on any trip. I study my itinerary to see what free blocks of time I’ll have—

during plane flights, at the end of the day in my hotel, between speaking engagements—and I check to see what work I need to get done for the upcoming weeks. Then I gather together all the materials I'll need for the trip: folders of notes and ideas I've collected for a lesson; quotes from my files, books, and magazines I want to read and glean information from; reports I want to read; correspondence I want to answer.

The secret to making this system work is the time I spend *before* I leave. Since I started doing this, I've never been on the road and thought, *Shoot, I could have gotten this project done or finished that lesson if only I had remembered to bring along such and such.*

Over the years, I've found that if I'm not strategic about how I work, I get into a bind because my schedule is so heavy. Even being strategic, I've had to surround myself with excellent people to help me carry the load. Linda, my wonderful assistant, schedules and plans every aspect of my travel—from the plane ride, to the hotel, to what will be onstage when I arrive at an event. She puts together my itinerary and gives me every bit of information I'll need for the journey. I am able to delegate nearly everything in my life, but I *never* allow anyone else to prepare for my work on the road or pack my briefcase. There are some things only you can do for yourself.

Packing for the Success Journey

As you prepare to take the success journey, there is an essential activity that only you can perform for yourself. It's the equivalent of packing your briefcase for a trip because it determines what you will be capable of accomplishing on your journey. That activity is preparing and pursuing a personal growth plan. That process, more than anything else, will determine whether you will continue growing toward your maximum potential. And as the old Irish proverb says, "You've got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather is." In other words, nothing in your past guarantees that you will continue growing toward your potential in the future—not positions obtained, degrees earned, experience gained, awards received, or fortunes acquired. Planning your growth—and then following through on it—is the only thing that works.

The desire and discipline to keep growing have always been very important to me. When I was growing up, my dad put me on a reading plan. Every day he required that I read for thirty minutes out of books he selected. And when I got my very first driver's license, Dad put a book in the glove compartment of the car and said, "Son, never travel

anywhere without a book. If you get stuck, you can use the time to read and improve yourself.” Dad also sent me to seminars, such as Dale Carnegie’s “How to Win Friends and Influence People,” when I was still in high school.

My dad’s growth plan sure helped me learn the value of personal growth, and when I was seventeen, I took a more active role in my development. That’s when I began to read systematically and file outstanding quotes from books and magazines. I had learned that shortcuts don’t pay off in the long run. If I was going to have a chance to reach my potential, I was going to have to keep learning, growing, and improving.

Growth Is Change

Just about anyone would agree that growing is a good thing, but relatively few people dedicate themselves to the process. Why? Because it requires change, and most people are reluctant to change. But the truth is that without change, growth is impossible. Author Gail Sheehy asserted,

If we don’t change, we don’t grow. If we don’t grow, we are not really living. Growth demands a temporary surrender of security. It may mean a giving up of familiar but limiting patterns, safe but unrewarding work, values no longer believed in, relationships that have lost their meaning. As Dostoevsky put it, “taking a new step, uttering a new word, is what most people fear most.” The real fear should be the opposite course.

I can’t think of anything worse than living a stagnant life, devoid of change and improvement.

Growth Is a Choice

Most people fight against change, especially when it affects them personally. As novelist Leo Tolstoy said, “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.” The ironic thing is that change is inevitable. Everybody has to deal with it. On the other hand, growth is optional. You can choose to grow or fight it. But know this: people unwilling to grow will *never* reach their potential.

Most people don’t realize that successful and unsuccessful people do not differ substantially in their abilities. They vary in their desires to reach their potential. And nothing is more effective when it comes to reaching potential than commitment to personal growth.

Let Me Help You Pack

Making the change from being an occasional learner to becoming someone dedicated to personal growth goes against the grain of the way most people live. If you asked one hundred people how many books they have read on their own since leaving school (college or high school), I bet only a handful would say they have read more than one or two books. If you asked how many listen to tapes and voluntarily attend conferences and seminars to grow personally, there would be even fewer. Most people celebrate when they receive their diplomas or degrees and say to themselves, “Thank goodness that’s over. Just let me have a good job. I’m finished with studying.” But such thinking doesn’t take you any higher than average. If you want to take the success journey, you have to keep growing.

As someone who has dedicated his life to personal growth and development, I’d like to help you make the leap to becoming a dedicated self-developer. It’s the way you need to go if you want to reach your potential. Besides that, it also has another benefit: it brings contentment. The happiest people I know are growing every day.

Take a look at the following ten principles. They’ll help you develop into a person dedicated to personal growth:

1. Choose a Life of Growth

It’s said that when Spanish composer-cellist Pablo Casals was in the final years of his life, a young reporter asked him, “Mr. Casals, you are ninety-five years old and the greatest cellist that ever lived. Why do you still practice six hours a day?”

What was Casals’s answer? “Because I think I’m making progress.” That’s the kind of dedication to continual growth that you should have. The people who reach their potential, no matter what their professions or backgrounds, think in terms of improvement. If you think you can “hold your ground” and still make the success journey, you are mistaken.

The only way to improve the quality of your life is to improve yourself. If you want to grow your organization, you must grow a leader. If you want to have better children, you must become a better person. There is no sure way to make other people in your environment improve. The only thing you truly have the ability to improve is yourself. And the amazing thing is that when you do, everything else around you suddenly gets better. So the bottom line is that if you want to take the success journey, you must live a life of growth. And the only way you *will* grow is if you *choose* to grow.

2. Start Growing Today

Napoleon Hill said, “It’s not what you are going to do, but it’s what you are doing now that counts.” Many unsuccessful people have what I call “someday sickness” because they could do some things to bring value to their lives right now. But they put them off and say they’ll do them *someday*. Their motto is “one of these days.” But as the old English proverb says, “*One* of these days means *none* of these days.” The best way to ensure success is to start growing today. No matter where you may be starting from, don’t be discouraged; everyone who got where he is started where he was.

Why do you need to determine to start growing today? There are several reasons:

- *Growth is not automatic.* Just because you grow older doesn’t mean you keep growing. That’s how it is with some creatures, such as crustaceans. As a crab or a lobster ages, it grows and has to shed its shell. But that’s not the trend for people. The road to the next level is uphill, and it takes effort to keep growing. The sooner you start, the closer to reaching your potential you’ll be.
- *Growth today will provide a better tomorrow.* Everything you do today builds on what you did yesterday. And altogether, those things determine what will happen tomorrow. That’s especially true in regard to growth. Oliver Wendell Holmes offered this insight: “Man’s mind, once stretched by new ideas, never regains its original dimensions.” Growth today is an investment for tomorrow.
- *Growth is your responsibility.* When you were a small child, your parents were responsible for you—even for your growth and education. But as an adult, you bear that responsibility entirely. If you don’t *make* growth your responsibility, it will never happen.

There is no time like right now to get started. Recognize the importance that personal growth plays in success, and commit yourself to developing your potential today.

3. Be Teachable

Former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden was an inspiring model of personal growth. He continually developed himself, and he did the same with his players, trying to help them reach their potential. One of my favorite sayings from him is this: “It’s what you learn *after* you know it all that counts.” Wooden recognized that the greatest obstacle

to growth isn't ignorance: it's knowledge. The more you learn, the greater the chance you'll think you know it all. And if that happens, you become unteachable, and you are no longer growing—or improving.

Wooden kept learning and growing, even while he was at the top of his profession. For instance, after he had already won a national championship, an accomplishment that most college coaches never achieve, he scrapped the offense he had used for years and learned a completely new one in order to maximize the potential of his team and the talents of one player: Lewis Alcindor, now known as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. The result was that he and his teams moved to an even higher level of play and won three consecutive national championships. And if you are to reach your potential, you have to keep growing just as John Wooden did. When you remain teachable, your potential is almost limitless.

4. Focus on Self-Development, Not Self-Fulfillment

There has been a change in focus over the last forty years in the area of personal growth. Beginning in the late sixties and early seventies, people began talking about “finding themselves,” meaning that they were searching for a way to become self-fulfilled. It's like making happiness a goal because self-fulfillment is about feeling good.

But self-development is different. Sure, much of the time it will make you feel good, but that's a by-product, not the goal. Self-development is a higher calling; it is the development of your potential so that you can attain the purpose for which you were created. There are times when that's fulfilling, but other times it's not. But no matter how it makes you feel, self-development always has one effect: it draws you toward your destiny.

5. Never Stay Satisfied with Current Accomplishments

My friend Rick Warren says, “The greatest enemy of tomorrow's success is today's success.” And he is right. Thinking that you have “arrived” when you accomplish a goal has the same effect as believing you know it all. It takes away your desire to learn. It's another characteristic of destination disease. But successful people don't sit back and rest on their laurels. They know that wins—like losses—are temporary, and they have to keep growing if they want to continue being successful. Charles Handy remarked, “It is one of the paradoxes of success that the things and ways which got you there are seldom those things that keep you there.”

No matter how successful you are today, don't get complacent. Stay hungry. Sydney Harris insisted that “a winner knows how much

he still has to learn, even when he is considered an expert by others; a loser wants to be considered an expert by others before he has learned enough to know how little he knows.” Don’t settle into a comfort zone, and don’t let success go to your head. Enjoy your success briefly, and then move on to greater growth.

6. *Be a Continual Learner*

The best way to keep from becoming satisfied with your current achievements is to make yourself a continual learner. That kind of commitment may be rarer than you realize. For example, a study performed by the University of Michigan several years ago found that one-third of all physicians in the United States are so busy working that they’re two years behind the breakthroughs in their own fields.¹

If you want to be a continual learner and keep growing throughout your life, you’ll have to carve out the time to do it. You’ll have to do what you can wherever you are. As Henry Ford said, “It’s been my observation that most successful people get ahead during the time other people waste.”

That’s one reason I carry books and magazines with me whenever I travel. During the downtimes, such as waiting for a connection in an airport, I can go through a stack of magazines, reading and cutting out articles. Or I can skim through a book, learning the major concepts and pulling out quotes I’ll be able to use later. And when I’m in town, I maximize my learning time by continually listening to instructive recordings in the car.

Learning something every day is the essence of being a continual learner. You must keep improving yourself, not only acquiring knowledge to replace what you forget or what’s out of date but building on what you learned yesterday.

7. *Concentrate on a Few Major Themes*

Writer C. S. Lewis asserted, “Every person is composed of a few themes.” As you develop yourself, you should identify and concentrate on the few themes at the heart of who you are. That’s what I have done over the years, and it has yielded a high return in my development. My life is people-focused. My purpose is to teach leadership and help people grow to reach their potential, so I have narrowed my personal development to these areas:

- *Relationships*, which determine how well I *know* people
- *Attitude*, which determines how well I *relate* to people
- *Communication*, which determines how well I *motivate* people

- *Leadership*, which determines how well I *influence* people
- *Personal growth*, which determines how *long* I develop the other areas

Where you focus your attention will depend on your purpose, how you wish to help others, and what it means for you to reach your potential. At first, you may be tempted to give your attention to too many things. But keep your focus narrow. Give your time and energy only to the themes at the heart of your life.

8. *Develop a Plan for Growth*

The key to a life of continual learning and improvement lies in developing a specific plan for growth and following through with it. I recommend a plan that requires an hour a day, five days a week. I use that as the pattern because of a statement by Earl Nightingale, which says, “If a person will spend one hour a day on the same subject for five years, that person will be an expert on that subject.” Isn’t that an incredible promise? It shows how far we are capable of going when we have the discipline to make growth our daily practice.

When I teach leadership conferences, I recommend the following growth plan to participants:

Monday: Spend one hour with a devotional to develop your spiritual life.

Tuesday: Spend one hour listening to a leadership recording.

Wednesday: Spend one hour filing quotes and reflecting on the content of Tuesday’s lesson.

Thursday: Spend one hour reading a book on leadership.

Friday: Spend half the hour reading the book and the other half filing and reflecting.

As you develop your plan for growth, start by identifying the three to five areas in which you desire to grow. Then look for useful materials—books, magazines, CDs, videos, podcasts—and incorporate them into your plan. I recommend that you make it your goal to read twelve books and listen to fifty-two audio lessons (or read fifty-two articles) each year. Exactly how you go about it doesn’t matter, but do it daily. That way you’re more likely to follow through and get it done than if you periodically put it off and then try to catch up.

9. *Pay the Price*

I mentioned before that self-fulfillment focuses on making a person

happy, whereas self-development proposes to help a person reach potential. A trade-off of growth is that it is sometimes uncomfortable. It requires discipline. It takes time that you could spend on leisure activities. It costs money to buy materials. You have to face constant change and take risks. And sometimes it's just plain lonely. That's why many people stop growing when the price gets high.

But growth is always worth the price you pay because the alternative is a limited life with unfulfilled potential. Success takes effort, and you can't make the journey if you're sitting back waiting for life to come along and improve you.

10. Find a Way to Apply What You Learn

Jim Rohn urged, "Don't let your learning lead to knowledge. Let your learning lead to action." The bottom line when it comes to personal development is action. If your life doesn't begin to change as a result of what you're learning, you're experiencing one of these problems: you're not giving your growth plan enough time and attention; you're focusing too much time on the wrong areas; or *you're not applying what you learn*.

Successful people develop positive daily habits that help them to grow and learn. One of the things I do to make sure I don't lose what I learn is to file it. In my office I have more than 1,200 files full of articles and information, and I have thousands upon thousands of quotes. But I also make an effort to apply information as soon as I learn it. I do that by asking myself these questions anytime I learn something new:

- Where can I use it?
- When can I use it?
- Who else needs to know it?

These questions take my focus off simply acquiring knowledge and put it onto applying what I learn to my life. Try using them. I think they'll do the same for you.

Author and leadership expert Fred Smith made a statement that summarizes what committing to personal growth is really all about. He said,

Something in human nature tempts us to stay where we're comfortable. We try to find a plateau, a resting place, where we have comfortable stress and adequate finances. Where we have comfortable associations with people, without the intimidation

of meeting new people and entering strange situations.

Of course, all of us need to plateau for a time. We climb and then plateau for assimilation. But once we've assimilated what we've learned, we climb again. It's unfortunate when we've done our last climb. When we have made our last climb, we are old, whether 40 or 80.

Whatever you do, don't allow yourself to stay on a plateau. Commit yourself to climbing the mountain of personal potential—a little at a time—throughout your life. It's one journey you'll never regret having made.

Develop Relationships with Growing People

Another factor in your personal development comes in the area of your relationships with others. Carefully examine your closest associations. You can tell a lot about which direction your life is heading by looking at the people with whom you have chosen to spend your time and share your ideas. Their values and priorities affect the way you think and act. If they're positive people dedicated to growth, then their values and priorities will encourage you and reinforce your desire to develop yourself.

It's not always comfortable to associate with people who are ahead of you in their growth, but it's always profitable. Look around you. Undoubtedly, you know people who could help you grow in one or more of the areas you want to develop. Try to cultivate relationships with them, but don't think only in terms of what you can gain. Always bring something to the table. You have to make the relationship win-win, or it won't last.

Dedication to growth not only enlarges you and increases your potential; it also motivates you. It begins a cycle of growth that, if sustained, leads to further and more extensive growth. And that leads to a more fulfilling and productive life.

During the course of my life, I've experienced the incredible power that regular personal growth brings. Chapter 3 showed you that attitude determines how far you can go in life. Growth adds another dimension to your abilities: it determines how well equipped you are for the journey. When your "suitcase" is packed well through continual personal development, you can go farther more quickly than you've ever dreamed, and the journey goes more smoothly because

you're better prepared for it. Even when you face obstacles, which we'll talk about in the next chapter, you're better able to keep going.

It takes time to learn how to pack your suitcase. In the beginning, we all have a tendency to try to take too much with us—not only on the success journey but on the other trips we take too. For example, a trip to Japan that Margaret and I took many years ago turned out to be a disaster because we didn't know how to pack. We bought two huge suitcases, and we filled them until they were absolutely full. We had done some traveling before, so we thought we were being smart by having only two heavy bags rather than a bunch of small ones. We would use porters or rental cars as we had done before at airports.

Everything was fine until we started trying to get around in Japan. A taxi delivered us to the train station in Tokyo, and after it dropped us off, we looked for a porter, but we couldn't find one. "No problem," I said. "I'll get one of those carts." We couldn't find one of those either. We ended up carrying those huge suitcases all over the station looking for the right track for our departure. Then we had to lug them onto the train and stow them away in our car.

We ended up doing that all over Japan. By the second weekend, Margaret and I were nearly ready for a divorce. In one city, as we dragged the bags "only a short walk from the train station" to our hotel, I dropped them in the middle of the street and shouted, "If somebody wants these bags, come get 'em. I'll take five bucks for both of them—contents and all." There were no takers. But one good thing came out of that whole experience. Margaret and I learned our lesson on that trip, and since then, we have become very good packers.

When you learn to become a good packer on the success journey, you'll be surprised by how high you'll be able to climb. The key is to focus on what you need and not anything else.

If you dedicate yourself to personal development, there is no telling where it will lead you in life, but I know one thing for certain: it can only take you up. If you haven't already, get started today. Make growth your main goal, and be prepared to climb higher than you believed possible.

Steps to Take Along the Way

What Should I Pack in My Suitcase?

You can develop to your potential if you pursue personal growth as a lifestyle. Follow these guidelines to help you get started.

1. ***Develop a Plan for Growth:*** The whole process begins with a plan for growth. It must be written and specific. The more concrete the plan, the more likely you are to follow it.

- a) Identify the top areas you wish to develop. Base your growth areas on your dreams and goals. To start, one or two growth areas would probably be ideal. Do not list more than five:

[Your Response]

- b) Find resources. Search for resource possibilities by reading trade journals, going to a bookstore, visiting a library, browsing through catalogs, and talking to people experienced in your areas of interest. List the top materials you find.

Books:

Audios:

Magazines:

[Your Response]

- c) Plan your growth time. Figure out exactly where you will “steal” one hour a day (five days a week). Will you get up an hour earlier? Will you use your lunch hour? Will you turn off the television from 7:00 to 8:00 every night? Where you get the time is up to you, but be specific, and try to stick with your plan.

2. ***Create a Climate for Growth:*** Plan to do each of the following at least once a day for the next month:

[Your Response]

- a) Affirm your spouse, child, employee, or coworker for doing something new that displayed a desire for growth.

[Your Response]

- b) Try something you’ve never done so that you’re taken out of your comfort zone.

[Your Response]

- c) Think about a benefit that your current growth plan may give you in the future.

[Your Response]

3. ***Develop Relationships with Growing People:*** True success always includes others. Build relationships for growth in the following ways:

- a) Find a mentor. Name the person you know who is growing and who has the most expertise in the area where you'd most like to grow. Your goal is to develop a win-win relationship with that person.

[Your Response]

- b) Spend time with growing people. Name the three best models for growth of all the people you know. Plan to spend time with each of them during the coming weeks. Your goal is to develop positive relationships and enjoy each other's company.

(1)

(2)

(3)

[Your Response]

- c) Pick someone to mentor. Select a person to help grow: a coworker or employee, your child, a fellow church member, etc.

[Your Response]

How Do I Handle the Detours?

When you take a journey, you never know for sure whether it will turn out the way you planned. It can never happen along the way that you don't expect. That's what happened to my wife, Margaret, and me on the way home from a trip to the Holy Land several years ago. We have been to Israel several times, and on that particular trip we took fifty people with us for a tour. Margaret and I are super planners, so in the space of a week, we saw more sights than many thought was humanly possible. But by the time we were headed back home, everyone was exhausted.

When we arrived in Paris from Tel Aviv at midmorning, an agent from the airline greeted us. "I'm sorry, folks," she said, "but your flight to New York has been canceled. There's a major snowstorm on the Atlantic Coast, and nothing is going in or out for the next twenty-four hours." After a week of being on dusty roads, rushing from site to site, sleeping in strange hotel rooms, and seeing tense soldiers with machine guns everywhere, our group was ready to be back home.

As we got the news, I could sense the disappointment and frustration among our people. Many who were traveling with us were older and had never been out of the United States before that trip. Previous departures from the planned itinerary had upset some of them. The major break in our travel plans was likely to send them into a panic.

Margaret and I looked at each other and knew we needed to act.

"Okay, gang, let's all get together over here," I said as I gathered everyone into a corner in the airport and took a quick head count. "How many of you have never been to Paris before?" I asked. All but a few hands went up. "Oh, this is great! We've got an awesome opportunity here," I explained. "We're going to take a tour of the city!"

Margaret's eyes lit up as she understood the idea, and she jumped right in to help. "Oh, you'll love Paris," she said. "It's the most

romantic city in the world.” A couple of the women in the group smiled, but the majority of the group looked at us with skepticism. “We’ll see the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower—you name it.”

“We are so lucky,” I said. “Do you know how much money most people spend to see Paris? They spend thousands of dollars just to get here, but we’re going to see it for free.” That got the attention of a couple of the men.

An hour later, we were at the hotel, and Margaret and I were working on getting the tour together. “No, monsieur,” the concierge said, “there are no tours available. I can maybe arrange something for tomorrow.”

“It has to be today. There must be something available,” I said.

“No, monsieur. I am sorry.”

“Then how about a bus?” said Margaret. He looked at her blankly. “Surely, there’s a bus in all of Paris. See if you can find us a bus—any kind of bus—and a driver.”

“That’s right,” I agreed. “Just find us a bus. We don’t care where you get it or what it looks like. It can be a school bus for all we care. We’ll take care of the tour ourselves.” It took us awhile to convince him, but he finally agreed to try. And he got us a bus—complete with a driver who didn’t speak a word of English.

We loaded up the group and gave them a whirlwind tour of Paris. “Take lots of pictures,” we kept telling them. “You’ll want to show everyone when you get home how you got an extra trip to Paris.” We showed them everything we could. And I’ll bet we even got the landmarks’ names right, oh, 70 or 80 percent of the time. They even experienced things they wouldn’t have on another tour. For instance, we spotted pop singer Madonna coming out of the Louvre surrounded by bodyguards, and everyone took pictures of her.

“It could only happen on the Maxwell tour,” one member of the group said later.

After we got home, our people had meaningful memories of Israel and the awe-inspiring places there. But their favorite story was about their one-day side trip to Paris.

Have you ever been on a trip that didn’t turn out the way you planned? If you’ve done much traveling, maybe I should ask instead if you’ve ever been on a trip that *did* turn out exactly as you planned. Because if you’re like most people, you’ve had all kinds of things go wrong on a trip. The success journey is the same way. You may have your journey clearly marked on your road map, but until you are actually traveling, the obstacles are not apparent. The journey is full of speed bumps, potholes, and detours. And since nobody can entirely avoid them, the question is, how are you handling them?

Isabel Moore aptly stated, “Life is a one-way street. No matter how many detours you take, none of them leads back. And once you know and accept that, life becomes much simpler.” One of the major keys to success is to keep moving forward on the journey, making the best of the detours and interruptions, turning adversity into advantage.

The Two Greatest Detours

As I’ve talked to people about success, I’ve found that the two greatest detours they face are fear and failure. When you think about it, those two deterrents could have stopped our tour group from having a good time in Paris. Fear of the unknown could have kept us huddled in the airport instead of heading out and enjoying the city. And nobody could have blamed us if we had given up when we experienced our first failure—not being able to find a bus tour. But fear and failure didn’t stop us. Neither should they stop you from taking the success journey. You see, every detour is also a potential opportunity, and it can prevent you from being successful only if you let it.

Facts About Fear

We all have fears. Nine out of ten people are terrified by the thought of speaking before groups. Some don’t like insects. Others fear heights, deep water, financial problems, aging, or loneliness. Fears come in almost as many varieties as there are people. The fears of some well-known people from history are even comical. For example, Julius Caesar, a powerful military general and Roman emperor, feared thunder. Peter the Great, the czar of Russia and an imposing figure at six feet five inches tall, was afraid of bridges. He crossed them only when there was no other alternative, and when he did, he trembled and cried like a child. And eighteenth-century British writer and literary critic Dr. Samuel Johnson had a phobia about entering a room with any foot other than his left. Any time he accidentally entered a room wrong-footed, he backed out and entered again with his left foot. He took wanting to put his best foot forward to a ridiculous extreme!

The Fallout of Fear

No matter how foolish or humorous another person’s fears may look

to us, our own seem serious. One reason is that fear can be a hindrance to success. If allowed to control our lives, fear can be a permanent detour on the success journey, stopping us from making any progress. Ironically, when fear succeeds in preventing us from engaging in an activity, we never find out whether that fear was truly justifiable. And that creates a vicious cycle, which can eventually take over our lives. Take a look at the pattern fear can create in a person's life:

*Fear breeds inaction;
Inaction leads to lack of experience;
Lack of experience fosters ignorance; and
Ignorance breeds fear.*

President John F. Kennedy said, "There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction." The bottom line is that if you can overcome your fear, you can break the cycle and live to see the death of your ignorance and the birth of your success.

Fear also causes procrastination. It divides our focus and weakens us. It can even make us feel isolated. Former NFL quarterback Fran Tarkenton said, "Fear causes people to draw back from situations; it brings on mediocrity; it dulls creativity; it sets one up to be a loser in life." Fear robs us of our potential and prevents us from moving forward toward our purpose in life.

Face Your Fears

When it comes to dealing with fear, you have three choices. First, you can try to avoid it altogether. But that means staying away from every known or potential fear-producing person, place, thing, or situation. That's neither practical nor productive. If you move tentatively from place to place, always worrying that around the next corner you'll come face-to-face with something that could cause you to fear, you will be tied into knots.

A second way to deal with fear is to hope that it will go away. But that's like hoping for a fairy godmother to rescue you.

Fortunately, there is a third way to deal with fear, and that is to face it and overcome it. In the end, that's the only method that really works. Here is a strategy to help you face the fear and do it anyway:

Discover the Foundation of Fear

Most of the fears we face every day are not based on facts. They are generated by our feelings. For example, a study conducted by the University of Michigan showed the following:

- 60 percent of our fears are totally unwarranted; they never come to pass.
- 20 percent of our fears are focused on our past, which is completely out of our control.
- 10 percent of our fears are based on things so petty that they make no difference in our lives.
- Of the remaining 10 percent, only 4 to 5 percent could be considered justifiable.¹

These statistics show that any time or energy you give to fear is totally wasted and counterproductive 95 percent of the time.

Fear is interest paid on a debt you may not owe. If you've allowed yourself to be detoured by fear, it's time to look beyond your feelings and examine the thinking that's generating your fears. Compare your thought patterns to the facts, and see where they don't match up. If your focus is on the past, try to move beyond it. If you're worrying about petty things, remind yourself of what is really important. And if you can't change your thought patterns on your own, seek the help of a professional counselor. Don't allow yourself to remain a prisoner of your feelings.

Admit Your Fears

The best thing to do in the case of your few justifiable fears (5 percent or less) is to acknowledge them and keep moving forward. That's what our esteemed heroes have done. For example, consider the life and career of someone like George S. Patton, a bold and innovative general who was instrumental in the success of the Allies in World War II. You might be tempted to think that he didn't experience fear. But that's not the case. He felt the fear, but he didn't let it stop him. He once said, "I am not a brave man. The truth of the matter is I am usually a coward at heart. I have never been in the sound of gunshot or sight of battle in my whole life that I was not afraid. I constantly have sweat on my palms and a lump in my throat." Imagine that: one of our bravest generals thought of himself as a coward.

One key to Patton's success was that he learned how to deal with his fear. He declared, "The time to take counsel of your fears is before

you make an important battle decision. That's the time to listen to every fear you can imagine. When you have collected all the facts and fears and made your decision, turn off all of your fears and go ahead!" If someone who considered himself a coward could do it, so can you.

Accept Fear as the Price of Progress

You must realize that the things you fear will come true or they won't. And your fear will not positively affect the outcome. Fear can only detour you—if you let it. That's why it is critical to accept fear as the price of progress. Dr. Susan Jeffries admitted, "As long as I continue to stretch my capabilities, as long as I continue to take risks in making my dreams come true, I am going to experience fear."

Any time you try to move forward into new territory on the success journey, there is a chance that you will fail. Your attempt to move forward may also make you look foolish. And the thought of that probably makes you nervous. That's all right. Just about every person who ever achieved something of value faced fear and moved forward anyway. True heroes are the men and women who conquer themselves.

Focus on Things You Can Control

Former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, one of the greatest coaches who ever lived, said, "Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do." Wooden was known for stressing excellence to his players and encouraging them to work toward their potential. He never made winning a championship his goal. He focused on the journey, not the destination. Yet his work ethic and focus on the things within his control earned his UCLA teams four undefeated seasons, an eighty-eight-game winning streak, and an incredible ten national championships. No one had ever done that before him, and no one has done it since.

As you move forward on the success journey, you need to remember that what happens *in* you is more important than what happens *to* you. You can control your attitudes as you travel on the journey, but you have no control over the actions of others. You can choose what to put on your calendar, but you can't control today's circumstances. Unfortunately, the majority of the fear and stress that people experience in life is from things they can do nothing about. Don't let that happen to you.

Put Some Wins Under Your Belt

Vince Lombardi, legendary coach of the NFL's Green Bay Packers,

once commented, “Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing.” He understood that past successes influence the ability to perform well. That principle also applies to overcoming fears. Each time you face a fear and move forward in spite of it, you are better prepared to challenge the next one. In time, you develop the habit of winning over fear, the smaller victories paving the way for the greater ones. Eventually, fear is no longer a major problem and no longer sends you on unnecessary detours from the success journey.

Feed Your Faith, Not Your Fear

The bottom line is that you have a choice. You can feed your fears, or you can starve them. Both fear and faith will be with you every minute of every day. But the emotion that you continually act on—the one you feed—dominates your life. Acting on the right emotion lifts you to success, while acting on the wrong one starts you on a disheartening detour.

The irony is that the successful person who keeps growing, taking risks, and moving forward feels the same feelings of fear as the one who allows fear to stop him. The difference comes because one doesn’t let fear dominate, while the other does.

The Power of Failure

A few years ago, my friend Max Lucado visited me. He wanted to sharpen his leadership skills, and he asked me to give him a hand. So he came for the weekend, and we had a wonderful time. Max is an incredible writer—one of the finest Christian writers today. As we ate dinner one night, I asked him about getting his first book published.

“Well,” he said, “in the beginning, nobody wanted to publish my stuff.”

I almost choked on my food. “What?” I said. “What do you mean nobody wanted to publish your stuff?” Max’s prose reads like poetry. It’s beautiful.

“Nobody wanted to publish it,” he answered. “I sent my first manuscript out to at least fifteen publishers before one finally said yes.”

“I bet some of those publishers are kicking themselves now,” I said. Max has published a lot of books since then, and I’m guessing he has sold a couple million copies. “When you were trying to get that first one accepted, didn’t you ever get discouraged and think about giving up?”

“No,” he said. “Every time I got the manuscript back, I thought,

Well, I'll just try another publisher."

That's when it hit me. Max had something that just about all successful people have: *the ability to fail*.

"Wait a minute!" you may be saying. "I thought we were talking about creating a road map for *success*. Doesn't success mean avoiding failure?" The answer is no. All of us fail. As we travel, we all hit potholes, take wrong turns, or forget to check the radiator. The only person who avoids failure altogether is the person who never leaves her driveway. So the real issue is not whether you're going to fail. It's whether you're going to fail successfully (profiting from your failure) or allow failure to send you on a permanent detour. As Nelson Boswell observed, "The difference between greatness and mediocrity is often how an individual views mistakes." If you want to continue on the success journey, you need to learn to fail forward.

Use Failure as a Springboard

Unsuccessful people are often so afraid of failure and rejection that they spend their whole lives avoiding risks or decisions that could lead to failure. They don't realize that success is based on their ability to fail and continue trying. When you have the right attitude, failure is neither fatal nor final. In fact, it can be a springboard to success. Leadership expert Warren Bennis interviewed seventy of the nation's top performers in various fields and found that none of them viewed his mistakes as failures. When talking about them, they referred to their "learning experiences," "tuition paid," "detours," and "opportunities for growth."²

Successful people don't let failure go to their heads. Instead of dwelling on the negative consequences of failure, thinking of what might have been and how things haven't worked out, they focus on the rewards of success: learning from their mistakes and thinking about how they can improve themselves and their situations. Depending on your attitude toward it, failure can either bog you down or help you along on your journey.

How to Fail Forward

Perhaps this isn't the first time you've heard this perspective on failure. Maybe you're willing to acknowledge the possibilities that this approach can offer, but you've had a tough time living it out.

Please let me help you change your thinking about failure and

approach it in an entirely different way. With each failure, you can move one step farther on the success journey. As hotel executive Conrad Hilton put it, “Successful people keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don’t quit.” Here are ten guidelines to help you change failure from detour to dividend:

Appreciate the Value of Failure

Never forget that you cannot take the success journey without experiencing failure. In fact, train yourself to think of failures as mileage markers. Each time you fail, know that you’ve traveled another mile farther on the road to your potential.

Failure has another value: it strengthens you. Henry Ward Beecher, nineteenth-century author, clergyman, and outspoken opponent to slavery, said, “It is defeat that turns bone to flint, and gristle to muscle, and makes people invincible, and formed those heroic natures that are now in ascendancy in the world. Do not, then, be afraid of defeat. You are never so near to victory as when defeated in a good cause.” Each time you experience a fumble, failure, or defeat, remind yourself that you’re one step closer to your potential and your dream. You’re learning to fail forward to success.

Don’t Take Failure Personally

Most people who never learn to fail forward are stopped because they take failure personally. They start saying to themselves, “Why can’t you do anything right?” or “You shouldn’t have tried; you knew you couldn’t do it,” or “See that; you’re a failure!” But there is a huge difference between saying “I have failed” and “I am a failure.” Someone who has failed can learn from her mistakes and move on. It doesn’t change who she is. But the person who tells himself, “I am a failure,” gives himself little hope of improvement. No matter what he does or where he goes, his failure stays with him because he has internalized it. He makes it an inseparable part of him. Asking someone who has convinced himself that he is a failure to be successful would be like asking an apple tree to produce cantaloupes. It can’t be done.

When I think back on my life, I realize that I took failure a lot more personally when I was younger, less experienced, and less successful. My mistakes looked a lot bigger to me then. But as time has gone by, I’ve learned to accept my limitations as well as my strengths, understand that everything I do isn’t going to be successful, and tell myself, “I sure messed that up. I’ll do better next time.”

If you’re in the habit of assassinating your own character or questioning your talent every time something goes wrong, stop it.

Making mistakes is like breathing; it's something you'll keep doing as long as you're alive. So learn to live with it and move on.

Let Failure Redirect You

Sometimes failure signals that it's time for a change in direction. If you keep hitting the wall, it may be time to back up and look for the door. If you keep taking the same detour, maybe it's not a detour but your main road. However, when you experience failure after failure but your dream burns within you just as strongly as ever, keep going. Also recognize that some of the greatest accomplishments of life literally were birthed out of failure.

For example, look at the life of John James Audubon. He is considered a pioneer in wildlife study and preservation. But in the early 1800s, he was merely an unsuccessful shopkeeper in Louisville, Kentucky. He attempted to support himself and his wife, Lucy, in that occupation, but after struggling for eleven years, he finally went bankrupt. That failure prompted him to pursue his life's work—observing, drawing, and painting wildlife, the thing for which he will always be remembered.

If you're repeatedly experiencing failure but you want to fail forward, allow your mistakes to redirect you. Maybe you're working someplace where you don't really fit. That doesn't mean that you're bad or wrong. It just means that you need to make an adjustment. If one door repeatedly closes on you, don't stand there forever wondering why you can't get it open. Look around for another open door. One may be standing open right now that you've continually overlooked.

Keep a Sense of Humor

When all else fails, laugh. That's my motto. It's *easy* to laugh when everything is going great, but it's *important* to laugh when everything is going wrong. Nothing improves emotional health like laughter. It relieves stress and helps you quickly put your mistakes into perspective.

As you make mistakes on the success journey, keep everything in a positive, humorous perspective. Try to look at life the way professional hockey coach Harry Neale did during a tough time. He quipped, "Last season, we couldn't win at home and we were losing on the road. My failure as a coach was that I couldn't think of anyplace else to play."

Ask Why, Not Who

When things go wrong, the natural tendency is to look for someone to blame. You can go all the way back to the Garden of Eden on this one. When God asked Adam what he had done, he said it was Eve's fault. Then when God questioned Eve, she blamed it on the snake. The same thing happens today. When you ask your daughter why she hit her brother, she says it's his fault. When the quarterback throws an interception, he says the receiver ran the wrong route. When you ask an employee why he didn't meet a deadline, he points his finger at someone else or cites circumstances beyond his control. And we won't even talk about all the lawsuits in which people blame others for their problems.

The next time you experience a failure, think about *why* you failed instead of *who* was at fault. Try to look at it objectively so that you can do better next time. My friend Bobb Biehl suggests a list of questions to help you analyze any failure:

- What lessons have I learned?
- Am I grateful for this experience?
- How can I turn the failure into success?
- Practically speaking, where do I go from here?
- Who else has failed in this way before, and how can that person help me?
- How can my experience help others someday to keep from failing?
- Did I fail because of another person, because of my situation, or because of myself?
- Did I actually fail, or did I fall short of an unrealistically high standard?
- Where did I succeed as well as fail?

People who blame others for their failures never overcome them. They move from problem to problem, and as a result, they never experience success. To reach your potential, you must continually improve yourself, and you can't do that if you don't take responsibility for your actions and learn from your mistakes.

Make Failure a Learning Experience

To be successful, you need to develop the ability to learn from your mistakes. You see, as Dr. Ronald Niednagel said, "Failure isn't failure unless you don't learn from it." That learning process changes what could be a permanent detour into a springboard to your potential.

Let me share with you one of the most inspirational stories I've ever read that illustrates this idea. It comes from the book *Dale Carnegie: The Man Who Influenced Millions* by Giles Kemp and Edward Claflin. The name Carnegie is synonymous with success. His Dale Carnegie Institute for Effective Speaking and Human Relations currently trains people all over the world. His book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* has sold more than fifteen million copies and continues to sell sixty years after it was first published.

But Carnegie's early life was plagued by failure. He grew up in poverty. When he determined to attend teachers college in Warrensburg, Missouri, he was able to do so only by living at home and riding to school each day on horseback.

Interested in public speaking from his teen years, Carnegie decided that he wanted to earn recognition at the college by entering speech contests. He never won a single one, but he learned each time he tried and failed.

Despite his hard work at the college, he failed to graduate when he couldn't pass Latin. So he moved from Maryville, Missouri, to New York City, where he tried acting and sales, but he continued to come up short.

Then he got what turned out to be a golden opportunity. He applied for a job at the YMCA teaching classes on public speaking. Because he lacked experience, the YMCA didn't offer him the usual salary of two dollars per session. Instead, he was accepted on a trial basis. If he was effective and retained students, he would earn money. If not, he was out of a job.

Though he had failed to win a speech contest or become successful as an actor, he succeeded at the YMCA. Those early detours had taught him a lot. Soon he was developing his own courses and writing pamphlets that he would later publish as books. As Kemp and Claflin wrote, "Carnegie rose to fame as one of the most effective trainers of speakers and one of the best-selling authors of all time. Two keys enabled him to turn failure into success: his unwillingness to be stopped by failure, and his willingness to learn from failure."³

Willingness to learn from failure and the ability to overcome it are inseparably linked to each other. If you're not continually learning, you're going to make the same mistakes over and over again. It's okay if you fall down as long as you learn something as you get up.

Don't Let Failure Keep You Down

Austin O'Malley asserted, "The fact that you have been knocked down is interesting, but the length of time you remain down is important." As you travel on the success journey, you will have

problems. Are you going to give up and stay down, wallowing in your defeat, or are you going to get back on your feet as quickly as you can? Or as a college friend of mine used to say, “I’m never down; I’m either up or getting up.”

A lot of people don’t think that way. Some have been down so long that they’re more comfortable lying down than they are getting back up. It has become a way of life for them. In fact, some not only stay down, but they will try to trip you up. Since they’re no longer interested in getting up, their goal in life is to pull someone else down to make themselves feel better. If you know people who act like this, steer clear of them.

When you fall, make the best of it and get back on your feet. Learn what you can from your mistake, and then get back in the game. View your errors the way Henry Ford did his. He said, “Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.”

Use Failure as a Gauge for Growth

When most people try to gauge success, they judge it according to how little failure they find. If they see flops or fumbles, they say, “He sure has messed up a lot. He’s a failure.” But that’s exactly opposite of how successful people see failure. They already know what the editors of *Fortune* magazine found out several years ago when they analyzed successful people. Most successes failed an average of *seven times* before they succeeded. You see, the more you try, the greater amount of failure you are likely to experience—and the greater amount of success. I don’t know about you, but I’d rather reach 90 percent of my potential with plenty of mistakes than reach only 10 percent with a perfect score.

See the Big Picture

Nothing is better at helping you deal with failure than perspective. Let me give you an example. Tom Landry, Chuck Noll, and Bill Walsh accounted for nine of the fifteen Super Bowl victories between 1974 and 1989. Do you know what else they have in common? They also had the worst first-season records of any head coaches in NFL history. Isn’t that incredible? If they had judged their potential for success on their first year in professional football, they probably would have quit. If life were a snapshot, and it had been taken during their losing seasons, they would have been in trouble. But life isn’t a snapshot—it’s a moving picture. They were able to overcome their failings and continue on the journey to reaching their potential.

Their failure was not final, and neither is yours. The next time you blow it, think about the big picture. There will be other days. We all

make mistakes, but we can come back.

Don't Give Up

I mentioned before that occasionally, failure is a sign that you should explore other opportunities. Although that is sometimes true, most often success comes as the result of good, old-fashioned tenacity. B. C. Forbes said, "History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They finally won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats." Failure comes easily to everyone, but the price of success is perseverance.

I couldn't begin to list all my failures, but I can tell you with certainty that I'll continue to add to that list. I hope to have twenty more good years, and in that time, I'll keep failing. The issue is not whether I am going to fail. Instead, when I fail, I need to determine whether I'm going to fail backward or forward—that's the real question. The detours can make a person better or bitter. It's my choice. And it's also yours.

Steps to Take Along the Way

How Do I Handle the Detours?

Now is the time to start handling the two detours—fear and failure—in a way that helps you along in your journey.

1. **Fear:** The key to overcoming fear and growing to your potential is action. It breaks the cycle of fear. Look at the following:

Fear > Inaction > Lack of Experience > Ignorance > Increased Fear

But when you replace inaction with action, look at what happens:

Fear > Action > Experience > Wisdom > Decreased Fear and Increased Success

Positive action in the face of fear overcomes it and leads to more action, less fear, and more success. Answer each of the following questions to help you take the next step on the success journey:

- a) What fear stands in the way of your next step on the journey?

[Your Response]

- b) Measure your fear against your dream and the development of your potential:

**Benefits of
Overcoming the Fear**

**Benefits of
Avoiding the Fear**

[Your Response]

- c) List the things you can and cannot control concerning your fear:

Things I Can Control

Things I Cannot Control

[Your Response]

Make a commitment to stop dwelling on the things you cannot control and work hard on the things you can.

- d) Give yourself a deadline to act. On what day will you begin to actively face your fear and do it anyway?

[Your Response]

- e) Write a credo to help you face and overcome your fears in the future:

[Your Response]

2. **Failure:** Use a recent major failure as a springboard to success. Respond to the following to work through the process:

- a) Describe your most recent failure.

[Your Response]

Make sure you aren't taking it personally. Check to see that you have not written something such as, "I'm a bad driver," instead of "I had an accident."

- b) How long has it been since it occurred? Are you allowing it to keep you down? If so, what can you do to bounce back?

[Your Response]

c) Is it time to use this failure to redirect your course? If yes, how?

[Your Response]

d) What can you learn from this experience?

[Your Response]

e) What is the big picture? Where and how can this failure fit in the time line of your life?

[Your Response]

f) Memorize these words: I will no longer avoid failure. It is a normal part of life. I will take risks. I will do my best. When I do fail, I will learn from it and move on. Failure is my springboard to success.

[Your Response]

Are We There Yet?

On a flight to San Diego from the eastern United States, I was sitting in first class trying to finish up a project I had been working on when the pilot announced that we were starting to make our descent into the city. I could hear everyone around me straightening up seats and packing up belongings. But I kept working. I knew I had another few minutes before I needed to put my files back in my briefcase and get ready to leave the plane.

Whenever I fly to San Diego, I can always tell how close we are to landing. If I'm sitting on the left side of the plane, when the Coronado Bridge comes into view, spanning San Diego's beautiful bay, I know we're only a few seconds from touching down on the runway at Lindbergh Field, and that's when I pack up my stuff. You see, when you've taken a trip often, you come to know where you are and when you're about to reach your destination.

Children certainly have a harder time knowing where they are on a trip than we adults do. Especially when they're young, they don't have a very good sense of the passage of time. And they don't naturally have a grasp of the big picture either.

Children can overcome their lack of perspective by learning the landmarks on the journey. For example, when I was a kid, I used to love it when our family packed up and drove from our home in Circleville, Ohio, to my grandparents' house in the suburbs of Detroit, Michigan. It took us quite a few hours to get there, and we didn't have to make the trip too many times before we began learning the landmarks. Our favorite was the city limits sign of Finley, Ohio. We knew that when we got to Finley, we were at the halfway point, and the end of the trip finally seemed to be in sight.

Look for the Landmarks

When it comes to the success journey, a lot of adults are in the same boat as children. They seem to continually ask the question, “Am I there yet?” Part of that comes from an impatience about being successful, but it also indicates that too many people—despite their hard work—can’t tell if they’re making progress on the journey or not.

If you’re silently asking yourself that question, the first thing I would tell you is to ask yourself a different question. You need to ask: Am I *headed* there? Remember, your goal is not to reach a destination; it’s to take a journey. The second thing I would say is *to look for the landmarks*.

You may be saying to yourself, “Why do I need to know about landmarks? Haven’t I already identified my goals? Aren’t they my landmarks?” These are good questions. But there are major differences between goals and landmarks. Goals generally provide an external target to shoot at in order to accomplish your dream. But success landmarks are internal, not external. They mark changes in you—in your thinking and attitudes—that are then reflected outwardly in how you act. The more landmarks you pass on the inside, the farther you will travel on the outside.

What It Costs to Reach a Landmark

Ralph Waldo Emerson pointed out, “For everything you gain, you lose something.” Put another way, you could say that for everything you gain, you pay something.

Reaching landmarks on the success journey requires commitment and persistence. It also requires sacrifice. To reach each landmark, you have to give up something of value. It’s a series of trade-offs. Popular speaker and friend Ed Cole declared, “All of life is lived on levels and arrived at in stages.”

Allow me to share several of the most significant trade-offs you will have to make in order to keep moving to a higher level during the success journey. To go to the highest level of success, you will need to choose.

Achievement over Affirmation

When I was in my early twenties and working in my first job as a pastor, I was a people pleaser. Receiving affirmation from others was probably my predominant motivation in life. And when I didn’t receive the recognition I desired, it really bothered me. I found out

how much it bothered me when I attended my first general conference.

I was really excited about going to the conference because I had been very successful in my first position, and I was anxious to share my accomplishments with everyone, including some of the guys I had gone to school with and other people I had gotten to know over the years. My situation would have been the equivalent of a company's new salesman taking the smallest territory available and developing prospects and business relationships that no one believed were possible—and then generating more revenue than the experienced salesmen in territories three times larger.

I expected everyone I met to be happy for me. After all, we were all on the same team, working toward the same goal of helping people. But that was not what I found. Nobody wanted to hear about how well I was doing, and I didn't get the affirmation I wanted so much. I admit, I was probably a little too cocky at the time, and I may have rubbed a few people the wrong way. But I also learned an incredibly valuable lesson. Affirmation from others is fickle and fleeting. If you want to make an impact during your lifetime, you have to trade the praise you could receive from others for the things of value that you can accomplish. You can't be "one of the boys" and follow your destiny at the same time.

A friend once explained something to me that illustrates this concept very well. He grew up near the Atlantic Ocean, where people catch blue crabs for dinner. He told me that as they catch the crabs, they'll toss them into a bucket or basket. He said that if you have only one crab in the basket, you need a lid to keep it from crawling out, but if you've got two or more, you don't. That didn't make any sense to me until he explained further. He said that when there are several crabs, they will drag one another down so that none of them can get away.

I've found that some unsuccessful people act the same way. They do all kinds of things to keep others from getting ahead, trying to prevent them from improving themselves or their situations. They use all kinds of devices to keep others in the basket with them: playing politics, promoting mediocrity, role-playing, and so on. But the good news is that if people try to do that, you don't have to buy into their belief system. You can stay out of the basket by refusing to be a crab. You may have to face opposition and live through times of insecurity, but you'll also experience freedom, increased potential, and satisfaction. Raise yourself up, and raise others with you.

Making the decision to trade affirmation for achievement may be one of the greatest obstacles you face. But when you're willing to do it, you have passed an important landmark on the success journey.

Excellence over Acceptability

Making a commitment to excellence is a fundamental step on the success journey. My friend Chuck Swindoll, chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, noted:

Competitive excellence requires 100 percent all of the time. If you doubt that, try maintaining excellence by setting your standards at 92 percent. Or even 95 percent. People figure they're doing fine so long as they get somewhere near it. Excellence gets reduced to acceptable, and before long, acceptable doesn't seem worth the sweat if you can get by with adequate. After that, mediocrity is only a breath away.

I don't know about you, but I've never met a man or woman of success who hasn't passed the landmark of dedication to personal excellence.

Believe it or not, lack of excellence has nothing to do with talent, personality, conditions, or luck. Excellence is always a choice. Willa A. Foster commented, "Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives."

To achieve excellence over what's merely adequate, follow these recommendations:

- *Pay attention to details:* It takes a lot of little things to add up to 100 percent.
- *Seek continual improvement:* NBA coach Pat Riley said, "Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better."
- *Practice self-discipline:* Daily disciplines separate the excellent from the mediocre. If you want to change yourself, you must change something you do every day.
- *Maintain high personal standards:* D. Bruce Lockerbie, former scholar in residence at the Stony Brook School in New York, insisted, "Mediocrity isn't at root a national problem nor a corporate or institutional problem; nor a departmental problem . . . You see, mediocrity is first, a personal trait, a personal concession to less than our best . . . Mediocrity always begins with *me!*"

Your level of performance is a choice. You can settle for mediocrity, or you can strive for excellence. But know this: you can't make adequacy your goal and reach your potential.

Future Potential over Financial Gain

Many things in life have greater value than money. Possibly the greatest is personal potential. I've frequently traded financial gain for the prospect of future potential, particularly when managing my career. Aside from my role as the founder of INJOY, and later, the John Maxwell Company, I've held only four positions in more than forty years. When I accepted my first position straight out of college, I selected the lower paying of the two positions I was considering because it offered more opportunity for me to grow. And in the two and a half decades since then, I accepted only one position that offered a higher salary than the one I left. In every other case, I gladly accepted a cut in pay to receive the opportunity for greater potential. Potential realized brings a person to a whole new level of living. Each time you relinquish the possibility of financial gain for an opportunity at future potential, you'll pass another major landmark on the success journey. Money often brings options, but it doesn't necessarily add value to your life. As you make decisions on the success journey, base them on potential, not dollars.

A Narrow Focus over Scattered Interests

When you're young and first starting out, you would do well to try different things. That's one way for you to learn your strengths and discover your dreams. Besides, people with an I-don't-do-that-kind-of-work attitude who haven't paid their dues don't go very far. Being able to focus your attention almost exclusively on what you do best is a privilege you earn, not a right. But if you're going to go very far on the success journey, at some point you must narrow your focus. It's a major landmark you pass in the second half of your life.

If you've seen the movie *City Slickers*, you probably remember a scene between Billy Crystal, who played a city slicker out West on a vacation, and Jack Palance, who played a crusty, old cowboy. Here's how their conversation went:

Palance: How old are you? Thirty-eight?

Crystal: Thirty-nine.

Palance: Yeah. You all come out here about the same age. Same problems. Spend fifty weeks a year getting knots in your rope—then you think two weeks up here will untie them for you. None of you get it. *[Long pause]* Do you know what the secret of life is?

Crystal: No, what?

Palance: It's this. *[Holds up his index finger]*

Crystal: Your finger?

Palance: One thing. Just one thing. You stick to that and everything else don't mean nothing.

Crystal: That's great, but what's the one thing?

Palance: That's what you've got to figure out.

The cowboy was right. That's what you've got to figure out. And when you do, you then have to be willing to give up a lot of the less important things in your life for the opportunity to do that one big thing.

Significance over Security

Most people enjoy feeling secure. But to keep moving to a higher level and reach your potential, you also have to be willing to bypass another landmark and trade security for significance. Newsman Tom Brokaw observed, "It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference." And that's the essence of significance—the ability to make a difference in your world and the lives of others.

Bob Buford talks about the landmark ability of shifting your attention to significance in his book *Halftime*. As he sees it, our lives naturally break into two halves, with a midpoint usually falling somewhere between ages thirty and fifty. He says, "The first half of life has to do with getting and gaining, learning and earning . . . The second half is more risky because it has to do with living beyond the immediate." And he adds, "If you do not take responsibility for going into halftime and ordering your life so that your second half is better than the first, you will join the ranks of those who are coasting their way to retirement."¹ According to Buford, the key to making your second half count is to make the shift to significance. The result is that you will experience a life of purpose and see the fulfillment of your life's mission.

No matter when you make the change to significance, whether it's during your "halftime" or at some other time of life, know that it is one of the most significant, life-changing steps—and landmarks—on the success journey. It's a decision that's always worth the price.

The Secret to Continually Trading Up

As you make progress on the success journey, you will frequently find yourself standing at a crossroads, and each time you do, you'll have to

make a decision. Usually, you have three choices: gain something, lose something, or trade something.

Early in life, you make decisions that either add or subtract. But as time goes by, life gets more complicated, and if you want to keep going forward, you usually have to make more trade-offs. That's essential to recognize. Many unsuccessful people spend much of their lives standing at the crossroads hoping for a situation where they can receive without giving anything up—but it rarely comes. As my friend David Jeremiah says, “You have to give up to go up.” And the people who want to move forward without making any sacrifices get stuck at the crossroads and never go any farther on the success journey.

There are two keys to being able to make good trade-offs on the success journey. The first is the willingness to make sacrifices. The truth is that there is no success without sacrifice. If you are currently succeeding and you haven't made any sacrifices, then someone who has gone before you has made some that are benefiting you. And if you're making sacrifices now and you're not seeing any success, be assured, either you or someone else will enjoy the fruits of those sacrifices later on.

The second secret to being able to make good trade-offs is old-fashioned persistence. You may have already heard this statement made by President Calvin Coolidge because McDonald's founder Ray Kroc was fond of quoting it: “Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”

The good news is that you don't have to be born with persistence to have it. It's an attitude that you can develop and strengthen. If you're inclined to *give in* instead of *dig in*, increase your persistence level by doing the following:

Develop Character

No quality will ever serve you better on the success journey than character. Robert A. Cook declared, “There is no substitute for character. You can buy brains, but you cannot buy character.” It not only helps you go far, but it helps you to make the right decisions along the way.

Take a look at the differences between the approaches to the success journey of people without character and with it:

Without Character
Does what's easiest

With Character
Does what's right

Controlled by moods
Looks for excuses
Quits when challenged
Relies on external motivation
Words and actions don't match
Choices lead to failure

Controlled by values
Looks for solutions
Perseveres when challenged
Relies on internal motivation
Words and actions agree
Choices add up to success

Olympic track champion Jesse Owens said,

There is something that can happen to every athlete, every human being—it's the instinct to slack off, to give in to the pain, to give less than your best . . . the instinct to hope to win through luck or your opponents' not doing their best, instead of going to the limit and past your limit, where victory is always to be found. Defeating those negative instincts that are out to defeat us is the difference between winning and losing, and we face that battle every day of our lives.

Jesse Owens overcame those negative instincts. He set world records in *junior high school*. Then he continued to improve and set a world record in high school. When he got to college, he didn't let up. In one track meet he set three world records in less than an hour. And then in 1936, he showed the depth of his character and his dedication to persistence while competing in the Olympics in the heart of hostile Nazi Germany. He tied one world record and set three Olympic records while winning four gold medals. His accomplishments are a testimony to his dedication, and they are a solid example of the role of character when it comes to success.

Focus on the Big Picture

Jesse Owens is certainly one of the most beloved champions in Olympic history, but not just winners show what it takes to be successful. On an October evening in 1968, a group of die-hard spectators remained in Mexico City's Olympic Stadium to see the last finishers of the Olympic marathon. More than an hour before, Mamo Wolde of Ethiopia had won the race to the exuberant cheers of onlookers. But as the crowd watched and waited for the last participants, it was getting cool and dark.

It looked as if the last runners were finished, so the remaining spectators were breaking up and leaving when they heard the sounds of sirens and police whistles coming from the marathon gate into the stadium. And as everyone watched, one last runner made his way onto the track for the last lap of the twenty-six-mile race. It was John

Stephen Akhwari from Tanzania. As he ran the 400-meter circuit, people could see that his leg was bandaged and bleeding. He had fallen and injured it during the race, but he hadn't let it stop him. The people in the stadium rose and applauded until he reached the finish line.

As he hobbled away, he was asked why he had not quit, injured as he was and having no chance of winning a medal. "My country did not send me to Mexico City to start the race," he answered. "They sent me to finish the race."²

Akhwari looked beyond the pain of the moment and kept his eye on the big picture of why he was there. As you make the success journey, keep in mind that your goal is to finish the race—to do the best you're capable of doing. You were created with a purpose. Make your decisions and plan your efforts accordingly.

Get Rid of Excuses

George Washington Carver said, "Ninety-nine percent of failures come from people who have the habit of making excuses." Carver was no stranger to adversity and could have easily made excuses for not succeeding. But that wasn't his way. Despite being born into slavery, he rose above his circumstances. He earned a B.S. and then an M.S. in agriculture from Iowa State College, and he dedicated himself to teaching poor African-American farmers. He developed an extension program at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute to take the classroom to the people in the South, teaching agriculture methods and home economics. And his research resulted in the development of hundreds of products made from crops such as peanuts and sweet potatoes. He did all that despite working with limited resources and opportunities because of segregation. Where others might have offered excuses, Carver achieved excellence.

Unsuccessful people can always find reasons for why they're not doing well. But successful people don't make excuses, even when they could justify them. No matter what the circumstances, they make the best of things and keep moving forward. That's what it means to persevere.

Understand the Odds

Once you understand what it takes to be successful, you understand the role that perseverance plays. You are able to beat the odds only if you have the discipline to keep going when others quit. As President Harry Truman said, "In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves. Self-discipline with all of them came first."

I read the results of a survey conducted by the National Sales Executive Association. Here's what they found:

- 80 percent of all new sales are made after the fifth call to the same prospect.
- 48 percent of all salespersons make one call, then cross off the prospect.
- 25 percent quit after the second call.
- 12 percent call three times and then quit.
- 10 percent keep calling.

The people who make up that 10 percent of the sales force are the ones who make by far the majority of sales. And what's true for salespeople is also true for you. Whether you're an engineer, homemaker, educator, or entrepreneur, success doesn't result from superior talent, intellect, or luck. Persistence pays.

Stay Hungry

The author Rudyard Kipling wrote, "If you don't get what you want, it is a sign either that you did not seriously want it, or that you tried to bargain over the price." How badly do you want to reach your potential and fulfill your purpose in life? Are you hungry for success? It will take passion on your part to keep growing, learning, and trading up. And that passion will feed your persistence.

Over the years I've found that we have to make trade-offs throughout life in order to succeed, and only through wise exchanges can we reach our potential. The problem of many unsuccessful people is that they haven't worked to develop much worth trading. They want to trade being a couch potato to become the president of the New York Stock Exchange. But it doesn't work that way. You can make a trade only when you have got something worth giving up. And when you do trade, you don't trade from the lowest level to the highest, skipping over all the levels in between. Usually, you're able to move only one level at a time—either up or down.

I hope you set your sights on moving ever forward and upward on your journey. To do it, you'll need to make trade-offs along the way, often giving up something good in order to get something better. But it's a price worth paying. And as you make the trade-offs, keep looking for the landmarks. They will tell you how you're doing—and whether you're coming closer to reaching your potential.

Steps to Take Along the Way

Are We There Yet?

Now that you know the answer to the question, “Are we there yet?” is always, “Not yet,” you can focus on developing persistence and making the trade-offs that will enable you to keep going to a higher level on your journey. Do the following exercises.

1. ***Developing Your Persistence:*** Harold Sherman, author of *How to Turn Failure into Success*, has written a code of persistence. Commit it to memory to motivate yourself to become more persistent.

I will never give up so long as I know I am right.

I will believe that all things will work out for me if I hang on to the end.

I will be courageous and undismayed in the face of poor odds.

I will not permit anyone to intimidate or deter me from my goals.

I will fight to overcome all physical handicaps and setbacks.

I will try again and again and yet again to accomplish what I desire.

I will take new faith and resolution from the knowledge that all successful men and women have had to fight defeat and adversity.

I will never surrender to discouragement or despair no matter what seeming obstacles may confront me.

2. ***Moving to the Next Level:*** On your current success journey, what would it mean for you to be on the next level? Where would you be? What would you be doing differently? What additional responsibilities would you have? What could you trade up to? Describe it here:

[Your Response]

3. ***Identifying What You Have Already Achieved:*** What have you already achieved that you will need to trade to make it to the next level? What must you sacrifice? (Note: Some things are never worth sacrificing: your integrity, marriage, family, faith, etc.)

[Your Response]

PART 3

SOWING SEEDS THAT BENEFIT OTHERS





Is It a Family Trip?

Fairly early in our marriage, Margaret and I realized that in my career, I would often have the opportunity to travel. And we decided that any time I got the chance to go someplace interesting or to attend an event that we knew would be exciting, she would come along with me, even when it was difficult financially. We've done a pretty good job of following through on that commitment over the years. But because I travel so often, and for a long time Margaret needed to stay home with our children, sometimes I've had to go on trips alone.

For example, I remember taking a trip many years ago to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to conduct a conference. Margaret and I love that area, especially the Amish country. The farms and old houses are absolutely beautiful. On that particular trip, I was fortunate enough to have a bit of free time to go exploring. So I drove around and enjoyed the countryside, had a delicious home-cooked meal at a little Pennsylvania Dutch restaurant, and did some shopping.

While I was in the area, I decided that I wasn't going home without a handmade quilt for Margaret. I asked around to find the best place to buy one, and I ended up at a farmhouse in the country that had more than a dozen quilts hanging on the front porch. I bought her the most beautiful one they had and had them wrap it up. I couldn't wait to give it to her when I got home. And as I hoped, when she opened the package, she was delighted.

I've really enjoyed bringing gifts back to Margaret and the kids over the years. And it's fun to tell them about some of the things that happened. It's a way to share the trip with them. But I've discovered that no matter what you bring back or what you do to include your family after you've gotten back from the trip, it doesn't compare to having them there with you.

I love taking my family with me—including on business trips—because I get the chance to share the opportunities and the rewards of the journey. Together, Margaret, Elizabeth, Joel Porter, and I went to

the capitals of Europe, the jungles of South America, the teeming cities of Korea, the rugged outback of Australia, and on safari in South Africa. Now that my kids are married with children of their own, we still make family trips a priority. Travelling together, we've met wonderful people of every race and a multitude of nationalities. We've had the chance to see and do things that will remain in our memories for the rest of our lives.

Those trips have been fun. But our travels around the globe don't in any way compare to another trip I've taken them on: the success journey. What would it profit me to gain the whole world and lose my family?

As I talked to people about the idea of the success journey and listened to them talk about their experiences, I heard interesting stories. For example, Stephanie Wetzel told me about an incident from a choir trip she took in high school. She and a choir of about fifty were traveling together across the country on a bus along with her choir director and his whole family: his wife, high-school-age daughter, and seven-year-old son.

The worst part of the trip was the long, hot drive across Texas. To break up the monotony, they would pull over at a rest stop every now and then to give the kids a chance to stretch their legs and go to the bathroom. After they had made one of these stops out in the middle of nowhere, they had been driving for almost an hour when they made a discovery. They couldn't find the director's seven-year-old son.

They immediately turned around and headed back toward the rest area. The director kept pleading with the driver to go faster. They couldn't stop thinking about some of the terrible things that could have happened to him in an hour's time. By the time they finally arrived at the rest stop, they were in a panic. Everyone scrambled out of the bus and began looking for him. It didn't take long. One of the boys found him in the men's room—killing flies. He hadn't even realized he had been missed.

If you have children, you know how traumatic an incident like that can be for a parent. Yet as much as parents love their children, every day many of them walk away from their families in the pursuit of success. It's almost as though they're driving down the road, and they get pretty far along before they realize they've left members of their family behind. The tragedy is that many value their careers, success, or personal happiness more than they do their families. They decide that it's too much work to go back, so they just keep driving. They leave their spouses and children behind to fend for themselves, just like that little boy would have been if the choir director hadn't gone back for him.

Did you know that according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics,

families dissolve at a greater rate in the United States than in any other major industrialized country? And we also lead in the number of fathers absent from the home. U.S. divorce laws are the most permissive in the world, and people are using them at an alarming rate.¹ To some people, marriages and families have become acceptable casualties in the pursuit of success.

But many people are now realizing that the hope of happiness at the expense of breaking up a family is an illusion. You can't give up your marriage or neglect your children and gain true success. Building and maintaining strong families benefits us in every way, including in helping us make the success journey.

Steps to Building a Strong Family

Good marriages and strong families are joys, and they make the success journey worthwhile. But they don't just happen on their own. Dr. R. C. Adams, who studied thousands of marriages over a ten-year period, found that only 17 percent of the unions he studied could be considered truly happy. And Jarle Brors, director of the Institute of Marriage and Family Relations in Washington, D.C., said, "We are finally realizing that we have to go back to the basics in order to reestablish the type of families that give us the type of security that children can grow up in." If we want to have solid families and healthy marriages, we have to work hard to create them.

If you have a family—or you intend to have one in the future—take a look at the following guidelines. They helped to develop the Maxwell family, and I believe they can help you to strengthen yours.

Express Appreciation for Each Other

I once heard someone joke that home is the place where family members go when they are tired of being nice to other people. Unfortunately, some homes seem to work that way. A salesman spends his day treating his clients with the utmost kindness, often in the face of rejection, in order to build his business, but he is rude to his wife when he comes home. Or a doctor spends the day being caring and compassionate with her patients, but she comes home exhausted and blows up at her children.

To build a strong family, you have to make your home a supportive environment. Psychologist William James observed, "In every person from the cradle to the grave, there is a deep craving to be appreciated." Feeling appreciated brings out the best in people. And when that appreciation comes in the home and is coupled with

acceptance, love, and encouragement, the bonds between family members grow, and the home becomes a safe haven for everyone.

I believe that the ability to appreciate each other comes first from the ability to understand how your family members are designed. If you're married, you're probably already aware of many of the differences between you and your spouse. You probably even expect differences. But you may be surprised to know that your children are also likely to be different—not only from each other but from you and your spouse.

A book written by Florence Littauer called *Personality Plus* helped Margaret and me understand our differences with the kids and each other. The information came as a great surprise and relief. It gave us insight into the four basic personality types:

- *Sanguine*: desires fun; is outgoing, relationship oriented, witty, easygoing, popular, artistic, emotional, outspoken, and optimistic.
- *Melancholy*: desires perfection; is introverted, task oriented, artistic, emotional, goal oriented, organized, and pessimistic.
- *Phlegmatic*: desires peace; is introverted, unemotional, strong willed, relationship oriented, pessimistic, and purpose driven.
- *Choleric*: desires power or control; is strong willed, decisive, goal oriented, organized, unemotional, outgoing, outspoken, and optimistic.²

Everyone in your family—and for that matter, every person you meet—will exhibit characteristics primarily from one or two of these personality types.

Another tool for helping you appreciate each family member's uniqueness is the ability to see each other's natural talents or "intelligences" as described by Thomas Armstrong in his book *7 Kinds of Smart*. When most of us look at others, we tend to measure them against our own talents or against a traditional academic view of intelligence. But Armstrong described seven different kinds of intelligence that all people have to one degree or another:

1. *Linguistic Intelligence* (the ability to use words): People who are smart in this area can argue, persuade, entertain, or instruct effectively using the spoken word. They often love puns, word games, and trivia; read voraciously; and write clearly. Examples: William Shakespeare, James Joyce, and Abraham Lincoln.
2. *Logical-Mathematical Intelligence* (working with numbers and logic): People with talent in this area have the ability to reason,

create hypotheses, think in terms of cause and effect, and find conceptual or numerical patterns in the things around them.

Examples: Albert Einstein, Sir Isaac Newton, Bill Gates.

3. *Spatial Intelligence* (thinking in pictures and images): People with spatial ability can perceive, transform, and re-create different aspects of the visual spatial world. They are sensitive to visual details, can visualize vividly, orient themselves in three-dimensional space, and often draw or sketch ideas. Examples: Pablo Picasso, Thomas Edison, and Frank Lloyd Wright.
4. *Musical Intelligence* (perceiving, appreciating, and producing rhythms and melodies): People with this intelligence have a good ear, can keep time, sing in tune, and listen to music with discernment. Examples: Johann Sebastian Bach, George Gershwin, and Beverly Sills.
5. *Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence* (knowing the physical self): People with gifts in this area are good at controlling their body movements, handling objects skillfully, and performing other physical activities. Examples: Michael Jordan, Charlie Chaplin, and Fred Astaire.
6. *Interpersonal Intelligence* (understanding and working with people): Those who have this intelligence are able to perceive and be responsive to the moods, temperaments, intentions, and desires of others. Examples: Ronald Reagan, Mother Teresa, and Zig Ziglar.
7. *Intrapersonal Intelligence* (knowing the inner self): People gifted in this area are introspective, good at assessing their own feelings, and capable of deep spiritual or intellectual thought. Examples: John Wesley, Laurence Olivier, and Joyce Brothers. [3](#)

All of us have a blend of strengths and weaknesses in each area that makes us unique. And once you have a good understanding of how the other members of your family are designed, it becomes easier for you to be more sensitive to each other and to express love for each other.

I've heard that for every negative remark to a family member, it takes four positive statements to counteract the damage. That's why it's so important to focus on the positive aspects of each other's personality and express unconditional love for each other, both verbally and nonverbally. Then the home becomes a positive environment for everyone.

Structure Your Lives to Spend Time Together

It's been said that the American home has become a domestic

cloverleaf upon which family members pass each other while en route to a multitude of places and activities. That seems to be true. When I was a kid, I spent a lot of time with my parents, brother, and sister. We went on family vacations, usually in the car. We had regular Saturday outings where we did things together such as going swimming, watching a ball game, or going to the movies. And we ate dinner together every day. That was our special family time, and we knew not to make any plans that conflicted with it.

As a parent, it was harder for me to keep that tradition alive. We've been good about planning and taking vacations together, but sometimes we've had to be creative to have time together. For example, when the children were younger, I always tried to drive them to school in the morning to spend some time with them. And I made it a practice to spend a few minutes with them individually at bedtime. But with all the things going on in our busy lives, we found that the only way to get time together was to plan it carefully.

Every month, I spend several hours examining my traveling schedule, figuring out what lessons I need to write, thinking about the projects I have to complete, and so on. And at that time, I'll plan my work for the whole month. But before I mark any dates for work, I write in all the important dates for family activities. I'll block out time for birthdays, anniversaries, ball games, theater performances, graduation ceremonies, concerts, and romantic dinners. And I'll also schedule special one-on-one time with Margaret and each of the kids and grandkids so that we can continue to build our relationships. Then once those are set, I'll plan my work schedule around them. I've done this for years, and it's been the only thing that's prevented my work from squeezing my family out of the schedule. I've found that if I don't strategically structure my life to spend time with my family, it won't happen.

Deal with Crisis in a Positive Way

Every family experiences problems, but not all families respond to them in the same way. And that often separates a family that's close from one that's barely holding together. I've noticed that some people pursuing success seem to avoid the home environment. I suspect that one reason is that they are not able to handle family crisis situations well. They find it easier to try to avoid the problems altogether. But that's not a solution.

M. Scott Peck, author of *The Road Less Traveled*, has offered some remarkable insights on the subject of problems and how we handle them:

It is in this whole process of meeting and solving problems that life has meaning. Problems are the cutting edge that distinguishes between success and failure. Problems call forth our courage and wisdom; indeed they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only because of problems that we grow mentally and spiritually . . . It is through the pain of confronting and resolving problems that we learn. As Benjamin Franklin said, "Those things that hurt, instruct."

If we are to grow as families and be successful at home as well as in the other areas of our lives, we must learn to cope with the difficulties we find there. Here are some strategies to help you with the problem-solving process:

- *Attack the problem, never the person.* Always try to be supportive of each other. Remember, you're all on the same side. So don't take your frustrations out on people. Instead, attack the problem.
- *Get all the facts.* Nothing can cause more damage than jumping to false conclusions during a crisis. Don't waste your emotional or physical energy chasing down a wrong problem. Before you try to find solutions, be sure you know what's really going on.
- *List all the options.* This may sound a bit analytical, but it really helps because you can look at emotional subjects with some objectivity. Besides, if you had a problem at work, you would probably be willing to go through this process. Give any family problem at least as much time and energy as you would a professional one.
- *Choose the best solution.* As you decide on a solution, always remember that people are your priority. Make your choices accordingly.
- *Look for the positives in the problem.* As Dr. Peck said, the tough things give us a chance to grow. No matter how bad things look at the moment, just about everything has something positive that comes from it.
- *Never withhold love.* No matter how bad things get or how angry you are, never withhold your love from your spouse or children. Sure, tell them how you feel. Acknowledge the problems. But continue loving family members unconditionally through it all.

This last point is the most important of all. When you feel loved and supported by your family, you can weather nearly any crisis. And you can truly enjoy success.

Communicate Continually

An article in the *Dallas Morning News* reported that the average couple married ten years or more spends only thirty-seven minutes a week in meaningful communication. I could hardly believe it. Compare that to the fact that the average American spends almost five times longer than that watching television every day! No wonder so many marriages are in trouble. Just like anything else, good communication doesn't develop by itself. It must be developed, and that process takes time and effort. Here are some suggestions for helping you do exactly that:

- *Develop platforms for communication.* Be creative about finding reasons to talk to each other. Take walks together as a family where you can talk. Call your spouse a couple of times during the day. Meet for lunch one day a week. Offer to drive the kids to soccer practice so you can talk. Communication can happen almost anywhere.
- *Control communication killers.* The television, computer, and telephone probably steal the most family communication time. Restrict the amount of time you give them, and you'd be amazed by how much time you have to talk.
- *Encourage honesty and transparency in conversations.* Differences of opinion are healthy and normal in a family. Encourage all family members to speak their minds, and then when they do, never criticize or ridicule them.
- *Adopt a positive communication style.* Be conscious of the way you interact with your family members. You may have adopted a style that stifles open communication.

If you're in the habit of using any communication style other than a cooperative one, begin working immediately to change. You'll have to do that if you want to build your relationship with your family.

Share the Same Values

I read an article by Dottie Enrico in *USA Today* called "Survey: Fallen Heroes Among 'Most Admired' Athletes." It came out during O. J. Simpson's criminal trial for murder. The article reported on a survey performed by Sponsorship Research International of Stamford, Connecticut, and the results were astounding. Among the top twenty athletes listed as most admired were Mike Tyson, O. J. Simpson, and Tonya Harding. The article went on to say, "Behavioral specialists say the presence of Tyson (a convicted rapist), Simpson (on trial for

murder), and Harding (who pleaded guilty to conspiracy) on the list is a disturbing statement about American values.”

One of the reasons people seem to be going astray when it comes to values is that families don’t give them the attention they once did. Boston College education professor William Kilpatrick said, “There is a myth that parents don’t have the right to instill their values in their children. Once again, the standard dogma here is that children must create their own values. But of course, children have precious little chance to do that . . . Does it make sense for parents to remain neutral bystanders when everyone else from scriptwriters, to entertainers, to advertisers, to sex educators insist on selling their values to children?”⁴

Common values strengthen a family and are especially beneficial to children as they grow up. A study conducted by the Search Institute showed that in single-parent homes, children whose parent expresses and enforces standards thrive at twice the rate of children who don’t have values promoted in a similar way.⁵ And that doesn’t even take into account whether the values are what we would consider positive.

The best way to get started in working toward sharing common values in your family is to identify the values you want to instill. If you’re like most families, you’ve never done that before. But to be able to live them out, you first have to find them out. They are the three to seven things you’re willing to go to the mat for.

Let me list for you the five we’ve identified in the Maxwell family so that you have an idea of what I’m talking about:

1. Commitment to God
2. Commitment to personal and family growth
3. Commonly shared experiences
4. Confidence in ourselves and others
5. The desire to make a contribution in life

The values you choose will undoubtedly be different from ours, but you need to identify them. If you’ve never done it before, set aside some time to talk about your values with your spouse and children. If your kids are older, include them in the process of identifying the values. Make it a discussion time. And never be reluctant to take on the role of model and teacher of your family’s values. If you don’t do it, someone else will.

Build Your Marriage

Finally, if you are married, the best thing you can do to strengthen

your family is to build your marriage relationship. It's certainly the best thing you can do for your spouse, but it also has an incredibly positive impact on your children. My friend Josh McDowell wisely stated, "The greatest thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother." And the greatest thing a mother can do for her children is to love their father.

A common missing ingredient in many marriages is dedication to make things work. Marriages may start because of love, but they finish because of commitment. Sexuality researcher Dr. Alfred Kinsey, who studied six thousand marriages and three thousand divorces, revealed that "there may be nothing more important in a marriage than a determination that it shall persist. With such a determination, individuals force themselves to adjust and to accept situations which would seem sufficient grounds for a breakup, if continuation of the marriage were not the prime objective." If you want to help your spouse, your children, and yourself, then become committed to building and sustaining a strong marriage.

I believe that few people have ever been truly successful without a positive, supportive family. No matter how great people's accomplishments are, I think they're still missing something when they're working without the benefit of those close relationships. True, some people are called to be single, but they are rare. For most people, a good family helps you know your purpose and develop your potential, and it helps you enjoy the journey along the way with an intensity that isn't possible otherwise. And when it comes to sowing seeds that benefit others, who could possibly derive greater benefit from you than your own family members?

Sometimes we need to be given a jolt to wake us up to the less-than-acceptable way we've been interacting with the people in our families. I know that happened to a friend of mine whom I met through my involvement with the Christian men's movement Promise Keepers. He said that one day when his daughter was in first or second grade, she and her classmates were asked to draw a picture of their families. She loved to draw, so she willingly tackled the assignment. That evening, she proudly brought her artwork home and showed it to her parents. When my friend looked at the picture, he said, "What's this a picture of?"

"That's us and our house," she answered. "The teacher asked us to draw a picture of our family."

He looked at the picture more carefully and saw that everyone was there—except him. "Sweetheart," he asked, "is Daddy in the picture?"

"No," she said.

"Why not?"

"This is a picture of us at home, and you're never here," she

explained.

It was as if she had dropped a piano on him. She had said it as a simple fact, without malice or any desire to inflict guilt. That was the day he decided that he was going to turn the bus around and come back for his family.

If you've been traveling down the road on the success journey but you've neglected to bring your family along, it's time for you to make a U-turn. Go back and pick up the people who matter most in your life. And commit yourself to following a road that includes them. What greater joy could there be than a family trip of success?

Steps to Take Along the Way

Is It a Family Trip?

To start strengthening your family relationships and including your family members on the success journey, you need to start spending time with them. One way to do that immediately is to include them in the process of working through the following exercises. They may balk at first, especially if you haven't spent enough time with them lately. But persevere. Your family is worth it.

1. ***Getting to Know Each Other Better:*** Review the information concerning the four personality types and the seven intelligences. (If you want more in-depth information, get the two books.) Then spend time with family members discussing the characteristics, and as a group, write up a profile on each person using the following model:

Name:

Dominant Personality Type:

Secondary Personality Type (optional):

Intelligences (rate each from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest):

- Linguistic Intelligence (words):
- Logical-Mathematical Intelligence (numbers and logic):
- Spatial Intelligence (pictures and images):
- Musical Intelligence (rhythms and melodies):
- Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence (physical self):
- Interpersonal Intelligence (other people):
- Intrapersonal Intelligence (inner self):

- a) Ask everyone to discuss any surprise characteristics that may have been discovered.
 - b) For the next week, go out of your way to compliment each family member based on some information you found out from the profiling process.
2. **Identifying Values:** Set aside an evening in which you can identify and discuss your family's values. Start by listing everything you can think of that's important to all of you. Then consolidate the list by combining some ideas and eliminating others. Try to get the list down to no more than seven. And use the time to discuss choices and how values affect them.
 3. **Spending Time with Your Spouse:** If you're married, plan a date night at least once a month (some couples do it weekly). Take turns doing the planning, and try to include activities that promote communication and interaction.
 4. **Improving Communication:** Try this experiment as a family. Agree to eliminate all television for a set length of time, such as a week, ten days, or a month. Then use most of the extra time to do things together that allow communication. Play games, go for walks, help the children with homework, read together, and/or tell stories.
 5. **Adjusting Your Calendar:** Sit down and schedule at least one hour per week with each family member for the next month. Try to select activities that both you and the family member enjoy. Mark it on your calendar as you would any business appointment. Then keep the appointment.



Who Else Should I Take with Me?

When our daughter Elizabeth was in her senior year of high school, Margaret and I decided to take her (and the rest of the family) on a trip to Hawaii as a graduation present. We told her about our plan several months in advance because Elizabeth isn't crazy about surprises. She likes to have time to process decisions and prepare herself mentally for change. We also told her that she could invite one of her girlfriends to go along with her on the trip.

For three months Elizabeth agonized over who she should take with her. A couple of times Margaret and I got impatient and wanted to make the decision for her. That just reflects our personalities. But we resisted the temptation. We understood that no one can pick someone else's traveling companion. And Elizabeth finally made her choice, picking the girl she thought would be most compatible with her. The result: both had a wonderful time.

Maybe you haven't thought about it, but you're going to have to make similar decisions as you take the success journey. One of the questions you will need to ask yourself is, Who should I take along with me? Certainly if you have a family, you will take them with you. But who else should go along? You might be saying to yourself, "Why would I want to take anybody else? If I can make the journey myself and even take my family with me, I don't need anyone else, do I?" Although you may be able to take the journey without others, I can tell you that you will never be able to reach your maximum potential and go to the highest level if you take the journey alone.

Living at the Highest Level

Over time I've learned this meaningful lesson: The people closest to

me determine my level of success or failure. The better they are, the better I am. And if I want to go to the highest level, I can do it only with the help of other people. We have to take each other higher.

I discovered this truth as I approached my fortieth birthday. At that time I already felt very successful. I was the leader of the largest church in my denomination. I had published five books. I was recognized as an authority on leadership, and I was teaching the subject in conferences and via audio lessons every month. I was fulfilling the purpose for which I was created, daily growing to my potential, and sowing seeds that benefited others. But my desire was to make an even greater impact on others. I wanted to go to a whole new level.

My problem was that I had hit a wall. I was running a large organization that required much of my time. I had a family. I was writing books, leadership lessons, and sermons continually. And on top of that, my travel schedule was packed. I couldn't squeeze another thing into my schedule with a shoehorn and a bucket of axle grease. That's when I made the amazing discovery. The only places where my influence and productivity were growing were where I had identified potential leaders and developed them.

My intention in developing leaders had been to help them improve themselves, but I found I was benefiting too. Spending time with them had been like investing money. They had grown, and at the same time I had reaped incredible dividends. That's when I realized that if I was to make it to the next level, I was going to have to extend myself through others. I would find leaders and pour my life into them, doing my best to bring them up to a new level. And as they improved, so would I.

The People Around You Determine Your Success

That process has changed my life. I've gone farther on the success journey and to a higher level than I ever dreamed about. And the people around me deserve a huge amount of the credit for my success:

- *Margaret Maxwell:* It all begins with her. Marrying Margaret is the smartest thing I ever did. Whatever success I've achieved, personally and professionally, I owe to her.
- *Dan Reiland:* He has been with me for more than thirty years. Dan has carried a tremendous load for me. And he is one of the

best developers of people that I've ever met.

- *Stan Toler*: I've known him for more than forty years. He is one of the greatest people I've ever known.
- *Linda Eggers*: My incredible personal assistant, she has worked for me for twenty-five years. No one does more for me than Linda. She keeps straight a life that by all rights should be total chaos.

There are a number of energetic people who help me in my organizations, and because of them I am able to do more things, teach more seminars, write more books, and touch many more lives. There is almost no limit to what I can accomplish because of the wonderful people I have around me.

Finding the Right People for the Journey

Having exceptional people on the journey with you doesn't happen by accident. It's true that the greater your dream, the greater the people who will be attracted to you. But that alone isn't enough. You need to know what to look for in order to find the best possible people. And you need to start by making sure they're compatible with you, just as Elizabeth did with her friend before going to Hawaii.

Even before you begin looking at the qualities that make a person right for going on the journey with you, you need to ask yourself a few questions about him. The first one is, "Does this person want to go?" That was a hard lesson for me to learn because, early on, I wanted to take everybody with me. I'm a fun-loving, sanguine kind of guy, and I want to be successful. I just assumed that everyone wanted what I did—to be successful and to strive to reach his potential. But that's not true. Many people have no desire to grow whatsoever. Their goal is to find a comfortable place so that they can go on cruise control for the rest of their lives.

And a person may not want to go on the journey with you for other reasons. For example, he may want to grow just as much as you do, but his interests don't coincide with yours. As a result, there is no compatibility. Margaret really helped me learn this lesson, and now I try to recruit only the people who are interested in going with me.

The second question you need to ask is, "Is this person *able* to go?" There has to be a match between the journey you want to take and the person's gifts and talents. For example, let's say your dream is to be a professional country singer. And you want to make a good living so

that you can help inner-city kids. The people you'll want to join you on the journey will probably have musical talent, business skills, or experience ministering to inner-city kids. Anyone having no talents in these areas is much less likely to be compatible with you and your dream.

The third question you should ask is, "Can this person make the trip without me?" You can look at some people and know they have everything it takes to make the success journey on their own. They have their own road maps and are not going to need your help. In fact, they are likely to be in a position to take others on the journey with them, just as you are going to do. In that case, make friends with them and try to keep in touch. Though you may not take the journey together, you may be able to help one another down the road as colleagues.

Once you've settled these issues, you're ready to look for people whom you will be able to help reach their potential and who will also help you reach yours. And that means finding potential leaders. Everything rises and falls on leadership.

Over the years, I've narrowed down what I look for in a potential leader to only ten things, and I want to share them with you. Here they are in order of importance. The people I want to take with me on my success journey . . .

1. Make Things Happen

Millionaire philanthropist Andrew Carnegie said, "As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do." I've found that to be sound advice. And as I've watched what people do, I've discovered that the ones I want with me are people who make things happen. These people discover resources in places you thought were barren. They find prospects where you believed there weren't any. They create opportunities where you thought none existed. They take something average and make it exceptional. They never make excuses—they always find a way to make things happen.

Even under the worst of circumstances—or with major disabilities—people with potential make things happen. Dr. George W. Crane observed, "There is no future in any job. The future lies in the person who holds the job." If you want to go far on the success journey, partner with others who know how to make things happen.

2. See and Seize Opportunities

Many people are able to recognize an opportunity after it has already passed them by. But seeing opportunities coming, that's a different matter. Opportunities are seldom labeled. That's why you

have to learn what they look like and how to seize them.

The best people to take with you on the journey don't sit back and wait for opportunities to come to them. They make it their responsibility to go out and find them. It's similar to the two ways you can go about picking up someone you don't know from the airport. One way is to make a sign with the name of the person you're expecting, stand near the baggage claim area, hold up the sign, and wait for the person to find you. If he sees you, great. If he doesn't, you keep waiting. The other way is to find out what the person looks like, position yourself strategically near the right gate, and search for him until you find him. There is a world of difference between the two approaches.

Ask yourself: Of the people around you, who always seems able to recognize opportunities and grab hold of them? The people with these qualities are the ones you're probably going to want to take with you on the success journey.

3. Influence Others

I mentioned before that everything rises and falls on leadership. That's true because a person's ability to make things happen in and through others depends entirely on her ability to lead them. Without leadership, there is no teamwork, and people go their own way.

If your dream is big and will require the teamwork of a group of people, then any potential leaders you select to go with you on the journey will need to be people of influence. After all, that's what leadership is—influence. And when you think about it, all leaders have two things in common: they're going somewhere, and they're able to persuade others to go with them.

As you look at the people around you, consider the following:

- *Who influences them?* You can tell a lot about *who* they will influence and *how* they will go about doing it by knowing who their heroes and mentors are.
- *Who do they influence?* You'll be able to judge their current level of leadership effectiveness by who they influence.
- *Is their influence increasing or decreasing?* You can tell whether a person is a *past* leader or a *potential* leader by examining which direction the level of influence is going.

To be a good judge of potential leaders, don't just see the person—see all the people that person influences. The greater the influence, the greater the leadership potential and the ability to get others to work with you to accomplish your dream.

4. Add Value

Every person around you has an effect on you and your ability to fulfill your vision. You've probably noticed this before. Some people seem to hinder you, always taking more from you than they give in return. Others add value to you, improving everything you do. When they come alongside you, synergy develops that takes both of you to a new level.

Lots of wonderful people have added value to me through the years, starting with the people I listed at the beginning of this chapter. Many of them have made it their main goal in life to help me. They complement my weaknesses and encourage my strengths. Their presence with me on the journey actually expands my vision. Alone, maybe I could have achieved some success. But they have truly made me much better than I could have been without them. And in response, I have always given them my best, trusted them implicitly, given them opportunities to make a difference, and added value to their lives.

There are probably people in your life with whom you experience synergy. You inspire and take each other to higher levels. Can you think of anybody better to take on the success journey? Not only would they help you go far, but they would make the journey more fun.

5. Attract Other Leaders

As you look for potential leaders to take with you on the success journey, you need to realize that there are really two kinds of leaders: those who attract followers and those who attract other leaders. People who attract and team up only with followers will never be able to do anything beyond what they can personally touch or supervise. For each person they interact with, they're influencing only one person—a follower. But people who attract leaders influence many other people through their interaction. Their team can be incredible, especially if the leaders they recruit also attract other leaders.

Besides the obvious factor of influence, there are other significant differences between people who attract followers and people who attract leaders. Here are a few:

**Leaders Who
Attract Followers . . .**
Need to be needed.
Want recognition.
Focus on others' weaknesses.

**Leaders Who
Attract Leaders . . .**
Want to be succeeded.
Want to reproduce themselves.
Focus on others' strengths.

Want to hold on to power.
Spend their time with others.
Are good leaders.
Experience some success.

Want to share power.
Invest their time in others.
Are great leaders.
Experience incredible success.

As you look for people to join you on the journey, look for leaders who attract other leaders. They will be able to multiply your success. But also know this—in the long run, you can only lead people whose leadership ability is less than or equal to your own. To keep attracting better and better leaders, you will have to keep developing your leadership ability. In that way, you and your team will continue growing not only in potential but also in effectiveness.

6. Equip Others

It's one thing to attract other people to you and have them join you on the success journey. It's another to equip them with a road map for the trip. The best people always give others more than an invitation—they provide the means to get them there. (I'll cover this subject in more depth in the next chapter.)

Think about this as you search for potential leaders: A person with charisma alone can draw others to her, yet she may not be able to get them to go on the success journey. However, a leader who is an equippier can empower an army of successful people capable of going anywhere and accomplishing almost anything. As Harvey Firestone said, "It is only as we develop others that we permanently succeed."

7. Provide Inspiring Ideas

Nineteenth-century author-playwright Victor Hugo observed, "There's nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come." Ideas are the greatest resource a successful person could ever have. And when you surround yourself with creative people, you're never at a loss for inspiring ideas.

If you and the people around you continually generate good ideas, all of you have a better opportunity to reach your potential. According to Art Cornwell, author of *Freeing the Corporate Mind: How to Spur Innovation in Business*, creative thinking is what generates ideas. And the better you understand how to generate ideas, the better off you'll be. He suggests,

- The only truly bad ideas are those that die without giving rise to other ideas.
- If you want good ideas, you need a lot of ideas.

- It doesn't matter if "it ain't broke." It probably still can use fixing.
- Great ideas are nothing more than the restructuring of what you already know.
- When all your ideas are added together, the sum should represent your breakthrough.¹

You are capable of generating good ideas—probably better able than you think. But you can never have too many ideas. That would be like saying you have too big a budget or too many resources when you're working on a project. That's why you would do well to get people around you who will continue to inspire you with their ideas. And when you find someone with whom you have natural chemistry, the kind that inspires each of you to greatness, you'll find that you always have more ideas than time to carry them out.

8. Possess Uncommonly Positive Attitudes

You already know how important a good attitude is to your success. It determines how far you will be able to go on the success journey. But don't underestimate the importance of a positive attitude in the people around you either. When you travel with others, you can go only as fast as the slowest person and as far as the weakest one can travel. Having people around you with negative attitudes is like running a race with a ball and chain on your ankle. You may be able to run for a while, but you're going to get tired fast, and you certainly won't be able to run as far as you'd like.

9. Live Up to Their Commitments

It's been said that commitment is another name for success. And that's really true. Commitment takes a person to a whole new level when it comes to success. Look at the advantages of commitment as described by motivational speaker Joe Griffith:

You cannot keep a committed person from success. Place stumbling blocks in his way, and he takes them for stepping-stones, and on them he will climb to greatness. Take away his money, and he makes spurs of his poverty to urge him on. The person who succeeds has a program; he fixes his course and adheres to it; he lays his plans and executes them; he goes straight to his goal. He is not pushed this side and that every time a difficulty is thrust in his way. If he can't go over it, he goes through it.²

When the people on your team share your level of commitment, success is inevitable. Commitment helps you overcome obstacles and continue moving forward on the success journey no matter how tough the going gets. It is the key to success in every aspect of life: marriage, business, personal development, hobbies, sports—you name it. Commitment can carry you a very long way.

10. Have Loyalty

The last quality you should look for in people to join you on your journey is loyalty. Although this alone does not ensure success in another person, a lack of loyalty is sure to ruin your relationship with him or her. Think of it this way: When you're looking for potential leaders, if someone you're considering lacks loyalty, he is disqualified. Don't even consider taking him on the journey with you because in the end, he'll hurt you more than help you.

So what does it mean for others to be loyal to you?

- *They love you unconditionally.* They accept you with your strengths and weaknesses intact. They genuinely care for you, not just for what you can do for them. And they are neither trying to make you into someone you're not nor putting you on a pedestal.
- *They represent you well to others.* Loyal people always paint a positive picture of you with others. They may take you to task privately or hold you accountable, but they never criticize you to others.
- *They are able to laugh and cry with you as you travel together.* Loyal people are willing and able to share your joys and sorrows. They make the trip less lonely.
- *They make your dream their dream.* Some people will undoubtedly share the journey with you only briefly. You help one another for a while and then go your separate ways. But a few—a special few—will want to come alongside you and help you for the rest of the journey. These people make your dream their dream. They will be loyal unto death, and when they combine that loyalty with other talents and abilities, they can be some of your most valuable assets. If you find people like that, take good care of them.

Who Else Should I Take with Me?

1. Use the following list of qualities to identify the people you want to recruit to take the success journey with you. Write the names of several people you know who exemplify each characteristic:
 - a. Make things happen:
 - b. See and seize opportunities:
 - c. Influence others:
 - d. Add value:
 - e. Attract other leaders:
 - f. Equip others:
 - g. Provide inspiring ideas:
 - h. Possess uncommonly positive attitudes:
 - i. Live up to their commitments:
 - j. Have loyalty:

[Your Response]

2. Now look at *your* answers and see which names have been repeated most often. Pick the top one to three people. These are the best candidates to take the success journey with you. Write their names below, along with the names of the members of your immediate family.

[Your Response]

The People I'll Take on My Success Journey

What Should We Do Along the Way?

Have you ever read a book that changed your life, significant way? I have. In fact, there have been several. But the one that stands out most in my mind is a book I read in 1970 by Dr. Elmer Towns called *The Ten Fastest-Growing Sunday Schools in America*. It was written for people in my then-profession, and it fueled my dreams and inspired me to dedicate myself to becoming better than I was. And it really propelled me in the direction my life was to take. Little did I know then that my journey and destiny would be linked with those of the book's author, Elmer Towns.

In 1975, I heard about a conference in Waterloo, Iowa, where Elmer was going to be a speaker, and I jumped at the chance to go. I tried to talk with him several times during the breaks so that I could tell him about the incredible influence he had on my life, but each time I tried there was a mob of people around him, and I just couldn't get close to him.

After the conference was over, I went to a Howard Johnson's restaurant to eat lunch, and I had just sat down when who should walk in but Elmer Towns. I introduced myself to him as he came by, and he said, "Come sit with us so that we can get to know each other a little bit."

So there I was, sitting at the table with one of my heroes. I couldn't eat a bite of my lunch; I was so excited I couldn't seem to swallow. And I was thrilled when he suggested that I change my travel times so that I could take the same flight with him to Chicago and sit with him and talk. We got to know each other a little that day, and it was a wonderful experience.

A year later as I prepared to host my first conference, I decided that I had to have Elmer as one of the speakers. So I called him up and

invited him and, to my delight, he said yes. Not only did he come and speak at the conference, but he spent time with me, casting vision for my life, challenging me to grow, and sharing his insight and wisdom.

Over the years, Elmer has been an incredible influence on me. He has been a mentor and friend, and he has inspired me to be a good leader. Many years ago, I had a chance to honor him publicly by sharing what he has meant to me with one thousand people at a banquet following one of my conferences. And for the occasion, I gave him a gift.

Elmer and I both collect signatures of great leaders. I have signed letters from about a dozen presidents and several clergymen, such as my hero John Wesley. My wife, Margaret, gets them beautifully framed for me, and I keep them on display. Not long before the event, I found and purchased an outline of a sermon written by nineteenth-century preacher C. H. Spurgeon. It was a remarkable find. The sermon used as its text the passage from the Bible that says, “Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee.”¹ It’s a passage written by the apostle Paul to his protégé, Timothy, encouraging him to use his gifts and pursue his destiny.

I had the Spurgeon sermon only a few months when I realized that I wanted to give it to Elmer at the banquet. Margaret asked me more than once, “Are you sure, John? You may never find another Spurgeon.” But I knew it was the right thing to do. I wanted to honor Elmer and give him a gift of appreciation for all he had done, and I couldn’t think of a better thing to give him. Elmer loves Spurgeon, and the text by Paul to Timothy perfectly described what Elmer had done for me. He had encouraged me to stir up the gift God had given me. So at the banquet, it was a real thrill to tell all those people about the wonderful things Elmer had done to mentor me over the years and to thank him with that gift.

What Elmer did with me, I have tried to pass on to others. I’ve already spent a good part of my life teaching and mentoring others in the areas of leadership, personal growth, spiritual development, and success. And I have dedicated the rest of my time on earth to continuing to do that. So the answer to the question that is the title of this chapter, “What should I do along the way?” is this: take somebody with you. It’s not enough for you to finish the race. To really be successful, you need to take somebody with you across the finish line. Henry Ford maintained that “most people think of it [success] in terms of getting. Success, however, begins in terms of giving.”²

Why Many Don’t Take Anyone

Along

Most people who desire success focus almost entirely on themselves, not others, when they start to make the journey. They usually think in terms of what they can get—in position, power, prestige, money, and similar perks. But that's not the way to become truly successful. To do that, you have to give to others. As Douglas M. Lawson said, "We exist temporarily through what we take, but we live forever through what we give."

That's why it's so essential to focus on raising others to a higher level. And we can do that with people from every area of our lives—at work and home, in church and the clubhouse. That's evidently what Texas Representative Wright Patman did, according to a story told by Senator Paul Simon. He said that Patman died at age eighty-two while serving in the U.S. House of Representatives. At his funeral, an older woman who lived in his district was heard to have said, "He rose up mighty high, but he brung us all up with him."

If mentoring others is such a rewarding calling, why doesn't everyone do it? One reason is that it takes work. But there are also many others. Here are a few of the most common ones:

Insecurity

Virginia Arcastle commented, "When people are made to feel secure and important and appreciated, it will no longer be necessary for them to whittle down others in order to seem bigger in comparison." That's what insecure people tend to do—make themselves look better at others' expense.

Truly successful people, on the other hand, raise others up. And they don't feel threatened by the thought of having others become more successful and move to a higher level. They are growing and striving for their potential; they aren't worried about having someone replace them. Raising up others is a successful person's joy.

Ego

Some people's egos are so huge that they have to be either the bride at the wedding or the corpse at the funeral. They think other people exist only to serve them in some way or another. Adolf Hitler was like that. According to Robert Waite, when Hitler was searching for a chauffeur, he interviewed thirty candidates for the job. He selected the shortest man in the group and kept him as his personal driver for the rest of his life—even though the man required special blocks under the driver's seat so that he could see over the steering

wheel.³ Hitler used others to make himself appear bigger and better than he really was. A person consumed with himself never considers spending time raising others up.

Inability to Discern People's "Success Seeds"

I believe every person has the seed of success inside. Too many people can't find it in themselves, let alone in others, and as a result, they don't reach their potential. But many do find that seed, and chances are, you are one of those people. The good news is that once you are able to find it in yourself, you're better able to do the same with others. When you do, it benefits both of you because you and the person you help will be able to fulfill the purposes for which each was born.

The ability to find another's seed of success takes commitment, diligence, and a genuine desire to focus on others. You have to look at the person's gifts, temperament, passions, successes, joys, and opportunities. And once you find that seed, you need to fertilize it with encouragement and water it with opportunity. If you do, the person will blossom before your eyes.

Wrong Concept of Success

The average person doesn't know what you know about success—that it is knowing your purpose, growing to reach your maximum potential, and sowing seeds to benefit others. He or she is scrambling to arrive at a destination or acquire more possessions than the next-door neighbors. But you know that success is a journey, and the most you can hope for is to do your best with what you've got.

Fred Smith said: "Some of us tend to think, *I could have been a success, but I never had the opportunity. I wasn't born into the right family, or I didn't have the money to go to the best school.* But when we measure success by the extent we're using what we've received, it eliminates that frustration." And one of the most vital aspects of how we're using what we received comes in the area of helping others. As Cullen Hightower remarked, "A true measure of your worth includes all the benefits others have gained from your success."

Lack of Training

The final reason many people don't raise up the people around them is that they don't know how to do it. Equipping others isn't something most people learn in school. Even if you went to college to become a teacher, you were probably trained to disseminate information to a group, not to come alongside a single person, pour

into her life, and raise her to a higher level.

What You Need to Know as You Start

Raising people to a higher level and helping them be successful involves more than giving them information or skills. If that were not the case, every new employee would go from trainee to success as soon as he understood how to do his job; every child would be successful whenever she learned something new at school. But success doesn't automatically follow knowledge. The process is complicated because you're working with people. However, understanding some basic concepts about people opens the door to your ability to develop others. For example, remind yourself that

Everyone wants to feel worthwhile.

Donald Laird said, "Always help people increase their own self-esteem. Develop your skill in making other people feel important. There is hardly a higher compliment you can pay an individual than helping him be useful and to find satisfaction from his usefulness." When a person doesn't feel good about himself, he will never believe he is successful, no matter what he accomplishes. But a person who feels worthwhile is ripe for success.

Everyone needs and responds to encouragement.

One of my favorite quotes comes from industrialist Charles Schwab, who said, "I have yet to find the man, however exalted his station, who did not do better work and put forth greater effort under a spirit of approval than under a spirit of criticism." If you desire to raise another person up, then you need to become one of her staunchest supporters. People can tell when you don't believe in them.

People buy in to the person before buying in to their leadership.

Many unsuccessful people who try to lead others have the mistaken belief that people will follow them because their cause is good. But that's not the way leadership works. People will follow you only when they believe in you. That principle applies even when you're offering to develop other people and raise them to a higher level.

The more you understand people, the greater your chance of success in mentoring. And if you have highly developed people skills and genuinely care about others, the process will probably come to you naturally.

How to Take Others for a (Life-Changing) Ride

Whether you have a gift for interacting positively with people or you have to really work at it, you are capable of mentoring others and lifting them to a higher level. You can help them develop a road map for success and go on the success journey with you as long as you keep growing as a person and a leader.

Here are the steps you will need to take in order to take people for a ride—one that will change their lives forever:

1. Make People Development Your Top Priority

If you want to succeed in developing people, you have to make it a top priority. It's always easier to dismiss people than to develop them. If you don't believe it, just ask any employer or divorce attorney. But many people don't realize that while dismissing others is easy, it also has a high price. In business, the costs come from lost productivity, administrative costs of firing and hiring, and low morale. In marriage, the cost is often broken lives.

If you want to make a difference in the lives of others, commit yourself to developing people and taking them on the trip with you.

2. Limit Who You Take Along

Like it or not, you can't take everyone along with you on the success journey. As you begin to develop people, think of the journey as being similar to a trip in a small private plane. If you try to take too many people along, you'll never get off the ground. Besides, your time is limited, and it makes more sense to help a few learn how to fly and reach their potential rather than show a big group only enough to whet their appetites.

When I teach leadership seminars, I always teach what's known as the Pareto (80/20) Principle: In a nutshell, it says that if you focus your attention on the top 20 percent in anything you do, you will get an 80 percent return. In the case of developing people, you should

spend 80 percent of your time developing only the top 20 percent of the people around you. That would include the most important people in your life, such as your family, and the people who have the most potential. If you try to mentor and develop more people than that, you're going to be spreading yourself too thin.

3. Develop Relationships Before Starting Out

Mentors make the common mistake of trying to lead others before developing relationships with them. Look around you, and you can see it happening all the time. A new manager starts with a company and expects the people working there to respond to her authority without question. A coach asks his players to trust him and go to the mat for him when they don't even know one another. A divorced father who hasn't seen his children in several years reinitiates contact with them and expects them to respond to him automatically, even though they haven't had time to rebuild the relationship yet. In each of these instances, the leader is expecting to make an impact on the people before building the relationship. The followers may comply with what the leader's position requires, but they'll never go beyond that.

As you prepare to develop other people, take time to get to know each other. Ask them to share their stories with you—their journeys so far. Find out what makes them tick, their strengths and weaknesses, their temperaments. And spend some time with them outside the environment where you typically see them. If you work together, then play sports together. If you know each other from church, meet with them at their workplace.

Another advantage to building relationships with people before starting on the journey together is that you find out what kind of “traveling companions” you're going to have. If you've ever gone on a trip with someone you ended up disliking, then you know what a difficult situation that can be.

As you bring others alongside you for the success journey, pick people you expect to like. Then get to know them to verify your choice. It's the best way to be effective—and enjoy the trip.

4. Give Help Unconditionally

When you start developing people, you should never go into it with the idea of getting something out of it. That attitude will almost certainly backfire on you. If you expect to get something in return and you don't, you will become bitter. And if you get back less than you expect, you'll resent the time you spent. No, you have to go into the process expecting nothing. Give for the sake of giving—just for the joy of seeing another person learn to fly. When you approach it that way,

your attitude will always remain positive. And the times you do get something in return, it's a wonderful win-win situation.

5. Let Them Fly with You for a While

I want to share a secret with you. It guarantees success in mentoring. Are you ready? Here it is: *never work alone*. I know that sounds too simple, but it is truly the secret to developing others. Whenever you do anything that you want to pass along to others, take someone with you.

This isn't necessarily a natural practice for many of us. The learning model that's used in America by most people for teaching others was passed down to us from the Greeks. It's a cognitive "classroom" approach, like the one used by Socrates to teach Plato, and Plato to teach Aristotle. The leader stands and speaks, asking questions or lecturing. The follower sits at his feet, listening. His goal is to comprehend the instructor's ideas.

But that's not the only model available for developing others. We also have one used by another ancient culture: the Hebrews. Their method was more like on-the-job training. It was built on relationships and common experience. It's what craftspeople have done for centuries. They take apprentices who work alongside them until they master their craft and are able to pass it along to others. Their model looks something like this:

- *I do it*. First I learn to do the job. I have to understand the why as well as the how, and I try to perfect my craft.
- *I do it—and you watch*. I demonstrate it while you observe, and during the process, I explain what I'm doing and why.
- *You do it—and I watch*. As soon as possible, we exchange roles. I give you permission and authority to take over the job, but I stay with you to offer advice, correction, and encouragement.
- *You do it*. Once you're proficient, I step back and let you work alone. The learner is drawn up to a higher level. And as soon as he is on that higher level, the teacher is free to move on to higher things.

In all the years I've been equipping and developing others, I've never found a better way to do it than this. And for a long time, whenever I got ready to perform one of my duties, I made it a practice to take along the person I wanted to equip for the task. Before we did it, we talked about what was going to happen. And afterward, we'd discuss what we did.

Maybe you've already done this with people. If you haven't, try it

because it really works.

6. Put Fuel in Their Tank

People won't get far without fuel—and that means resources for their continuing personal growth. Any mentor can give that valuable gift to someone he is developing. Many people don't know where to find good resources or what kinds of materials to select, especially when they're just starting out.

I regularly share books, tapes, and videos with the people I'm developing and equipping. And I also enjoy sending them to seminars. My goal is always to "bring something to the table" when I spend time with someone, whether it's an employee, a colleague, or a friend. I always want to be a resource person for them.

You can do the same thing for others. Start by sharing the books and resources that have changed your life. And be on the lookout for good material in others' areas of interest. There are few greater thrills than putting into others' hands a resource that can help take them to the next level.

7. Stay with Them Until They Can Solo Successfully

I've been told that every student pilot looks forward to the first solo flight with anticipation—and a certain amount of fear. But a good flight instructor wouldn't allow a student to take that solo flight until he is ready, nor would he let a student avoid her solo once she is ready. I guess you could say that's the difference between a true mentor and a wanna-be. It's kind of like the difference between a flight instructor and a travel agent. The one stays with you, guiding you through the entire process until you're ready to fly. The other hands you a ticket and says, "Have a good flight."

As you develop people, remember that you are *taking* them on the success journey with you, not sending them. Stay with them until they're ready to fly. And when they are ready, get them on their way.

8. Clear the Flight Path

Even after teaching people to fly, providing them with fuel, and giving them permission to take the controls, some mentors don't take the next step required to make their people successful.

They don't give them an unencumbered flight path. They usually don't intentionally restrict the people they're developing, but it still happens.

Here are several common obstacles created by mentors for potential leaders:

- *Lack of clear direction:* Many times a potential leader gets mentored and learns how to do a job, then he is left adrift, without any direction from his leader.
- *Bureaucracy:* Or she learns how her leader works and thinks, and then she is put into a bureaucratic system that stifles the innovative spirit that the mentor just engendered.
- *Isolation:* Everyone needs a community of people with whom to share and from whom to draw support. Often if the mentor doesn't provide it, the new leader won't have it.
- *Busywork:* Work with no perceived value demoralizes and demotivates people.
- *Poor or dishonest communication:* An agenda that isn't communicated honestly to the person being developed hinders the relationship and confuses the potential leader.

Once you begin to develop others, check to see that you're not leaving obstacles in their path. Give them clear direction, positive support, and the freedom to fly. What you do can make the difference between their failure and success. And when they succeed, so do you.

9. Help Them Repeat the Process

After you've done everything you can to help your people, and they have taken off and are soaring, you may think you're finished. But you're not. There is still one more step you must take to complete the process. You have to help them learn to repeat the development process and teach others to fly. You see, there is no success without a successor.

A great joy in my life has been to see how leaders I've developed and equipped have turned around and repeated the process with others. It must be similar to the joy a great-grandfather feels as he looks at the generations that have been raised up in his family. With each successive generation, the success continues.

This process of reproduction has become a pattern in my life. For example, when I got to San Diego in 1981, I hired an assistant named Barbara Brumagin. I trained her, teaching her everything she needed to know to maximize my time and talents. She stayed with me for eleven years. But before she left me, she equipped Linda Eggers, who is my assistant today. Linda has been with me for twenty-five years, and she is in the process of mentoring and equipping her own assistants.

The positive effects of developing others are remarkable. But you

don't have to be a remarkable or unusually talented person to mentor others. You can raise up people around you and teach them to fly, just as I have. It does take desire and a commitment to the process, but it is the most rewarding part of success. Raising up others is the greatest joy in the world. You see, once people learn to fly, they're capable of going just about anywhere. And sometimes when they're flying high, they help you along too.

Steps to Take Along the Way

What Should We Do Along the Way?

1. **Identifying Development Areas:** Now it's time to develop a strategy for mentoring the people you selected in the exercise at the end of chapter 9. Use the following grid to brainstorm how you can develop the people around you.

Name of Person	Greatest Strength	Areas to Develop	Resources to Share

[Your Response]

2. **Making the Development of People Part of Your Routine:** During the next month, plan to spend time developing your family members and the top people from other areas of your life (work, church, etc.). Using the preceding grid and your calendar, schedule mentoring time with each person. Don't forget to plan bringing

along people you intend to develop as you do various tasks. You may even want to get into the habit of writing the initials of the person you intend to have accompany you in your planner or calendar each time you make out your schedule. Also set aside time to select and gather the resources you intend to share with people.

[Your Response]

3. **Planning Monthly:** Mark a block of time on your calendar next month to repeat this process. And you will want to keep repeating it—as long as you intend to keep developing others.

[Your Response]

AFTERWORD

What Did You Like Best About the Trip?

I mentioned in chapter 5 that when I was seven I began filing quotes and articles for future use. I knew the discipline of performing those tasks was necessary if I was going to be able to fulfill my purpose and reach my potential. It was especially important in a profession where I would be required to write and speak. More than forty years have passed since I began that practice, and I've drawn on that knowledge and the material I've filed almost every day.

And that's what I've done while writing this book. I've drawn from things I've gleaned, personal experiences, and the material I've filed over the years. In a manner of speaking, you could say that this book wasn't created this year when it was published. It wasn't even created when the manuscript was written. It was written over a forty-year period. Like success, this book has been a journey in the making.

So now you know what it means to take a success journey. I hope that you have a stronger sense of your purpose, you understand what it means to grow to your potential, and you are ready to start sowing seeds that benefit others—if you haven't already begun to do so. But before we finish our brief journey together, I've got to ask you one other question. It's the same question I've asked my children and grandchildren each time we've come to the end of a journey: "What did you like best about the trip?"

You see, the danger with any book is that the person who reads it will turn the last page, put down the book, and never think about it again. I certainly hope that doesn't happen in your case because I want the ideas that I've presented to radically change your life.

That was always my goal whenever I took my children on a trip—for their lives to be changed. I wanted them to come back better than they left. That question—"What did you like best about the trip?"—

was something I asked to help them process and apply what they had encountered on the journey. And now I'm asking you that question to help you process and apply the principles in this book.

Awhile back, my old friend Stan Toler and I were reminiscing about the success journey we've taken together. Stan and I go back a long way, all the way to our years in college. And in the early seventies, when I was ready to hire my first staff member, Stan was the person I wanted.

Stan has come a long way in his life. He was born into a poor coal-mining family in West Virginia. When he was a young boy, his family moved to Columbus, Ohio, to try to make a better life for themselves, but it wasn't too long after the move that they lost his dad. It was very tough on them, but he, his mom, and his two brothers were able to survive.

Stan began working as a pastor when he was in the eleventh grade. After he finished high school, he continued working with the church and learned to be a barber in order to make a living. And he also enrolled in Circleville Bible College. On the day he walked across the stage to receive his degree from the president of the college, Melvin Maxwell (my father), he was the first person in his family to have received a college education.

I knew from the start that Stan was loaded with talent and potential. But I also saw that he still had some growing to do: his grammar was poor (which is trouble for someone who does a lot of speaking), he lacked confidence, and he had a poor self-image. Stan needed a little encouragement to help him realize his potential. And I wanted to do everything I could to provide as much of that encouragement as possible.

First, I let Stan know his great value. Every day when I worked with him, I tried to let him know how much potential he had and how much I believed in him. I gave him duties that I knew would stretch him and make him grow. I encouraged him to speak at conferences and begin mentoring others. And when he thought about giving up on continuing his education, I encouraged him to keep growing and developing.

Today, Stan holds two bachelor's degrees, a master's degree, an earned doctorate, and an honorary doctor of divinity degree. And he continues to challenge himself and grow. He has written several books, and he spends the majority of his time teaching and mentoring others.

I believe Stan would have made the success journey without help from me. But I'm sure glad I was able to give him a hand along the way. And I know he has helped me to go to a higher level. He helped me to be a success more than thirty years ago when he was my sole

staff member in Lancaster, Ohio, and he continued to help me by being a part of the winning team at INJOY. Now he travels from city to city teaching people to grow. Stan is a success: He knows his purpose, he is growing to his potential, and he is sowing seeds to benefit others. And on top of that, he has always been a true friend.

I'm here to encourage you and tell you that you can do it too. You can travel the road of success. I don't know where you are on the journey because I haven't had the pleasure of meeting you in person. But whether you're just getting started, arriving at the middle of the trip, or approaching the end of it, you can make it. You can travel the road you were designed to take, and you can finish strong.

Few things worth having in life are easy. But if you persevere, it probably won't be long before you realize that you truly are successful. At first, others may not recognize it, and you won't get the credit you deserve. But as you continue to grow and work at fulfilling your purpose, a time will probably come when others suddenly consider you an overnight success and say, "Wow, how did he get so good so quickly?" And if you continue to be growth oriented rather than goal oriented, you'll stay on the path of success, and people may even give you more credit than you deserve. But no matter what happens, keep following your road map and moving forward on the journey, staying true to your new definition of success. And as you go, make sure you take others with you.

Three, five, or even ten years from now, maybe we'll get a chance to meet. And things will have changed for both of us. I hope you will tell me then that you've gone higher up the mountain than you ever expected. And we'll reminisce, as Stan and I have. And that's when I'll ask you again, "What did you like best about the trip?"

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About the Author



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